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**PERFECT
PASTA SAUCE**
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Soul Food Secrets

**WORLD'S
BEST
CARAMEL
CAKE**
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Chicago!

From delectable deep dish pizza to cutting-edge restaurants, discover why the Windy City is America's new culinary star; plus 21 terrific home-style recipes



NUMBER **105**

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When it comes to “Grana”—as firm grating cheeses are broadly known in Italy—native cooks have always savored the best, like the traditional Grana Padano, for more than sprinkling over plates of pasta. In recent years, as Grana Padano has become more widely available in the United States, Americans, too, have been catching on to the myriad charms of the cheese: they’re melting it into panini, studding salads

with shards of it, and serving it on cheese plates with salumi and dried fruit.

“It’s one of the world’s great cheeses,” says Lou Di Paolo, a purveyor and importer of Italian specialty foods, who oversees his family’s historic shop, Di Paolo’s Fine Foods, in Manhattan’s Little Italy. Mr. Di Paolo, who flies to Italy several times a year to handpick his wheels of Grana Padano, uses a traditional spear-shaped knife to chip away chunks of the cheese

along its natural fault lines, revealing its pale gold color and releasing its fragrant, nutty aroma.

Grana Padano is the *original grana cheese* born in Italy’s verdant Padana Valley, also known as the Po Valley, more than a thousand years ago; monks developed the recipe to preserve surplus milk from their cows. The term grana refers to the cheese’s slightly granular texture, which is dotted with deliciously crunchy protein crystals

Grana Padano A DELICIOUS MODERN TRADITION



www.granapadano.com

that form during the ripening stage. Grana Padano contains less fat than other hard cheeses, since it's made from milk that has been skimmed of its densest cream. It is produced in a wide area that extends from Piemonte to Veneto and also includes the Piacenza province (in the Emilia-Romagna region) and Trento (in the trentino Alto-Adige region). This geographic range allows for slight variations that make each region's version special: depending on the

area where Grana Padano is produced, you'll find spicier notes or milder flavors. Regardless of origin, Grana Padano is strictly regulated by a consortium of more than 200 producers. Every wheel is branded with the date and the code of the producer.

When you're purchasing Grana Padano, it's best to buy from vendors who offer wheels at various stages of ripeness. Grana Padano that's been aged for 12 to

16 months has a creamy texture and a fresh, milky flavor. Grana Padano wheels that are aged over 16 months (a maximum of 24 months), after passing extra tests and if requested by the producer, can be branded riserva; this cheese has a deep flavor and is an extraordinary treat. Whichever age you decide on, Grana Padano is remarkably versatile in the kitchen, suitable for melting, grating, and, of course, nibbling on its own.



Sautéed Broccoli Rabe with Grana Padano (serves 4)

2 bunches broccoli rabe (about 2 pounds), 1" of the ends trimmed
 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
 4 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
 2 dried chiles de árbol, stemmed and broken into small pieces
 Freshly ground black pepper
 Generous shavings of Grana Padano

Salt

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the broccoli rabe and cook until crisp-tender, 2–3 minutes. Drain.

Combine the oil, garlic, and chiles in a large skillet; place over medium heat and cook, stirring, until fragrant and sizzling, but not browned, about 1 minute. Add the broccoli rabe and cook until hot. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Arrange on a platter, drizzle with oil, and scatter the Grana Padano over the top. Serve hot or at room temperature.



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COVER

The deep dish pizza at Burt's Place.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LANDON NORDEMAN

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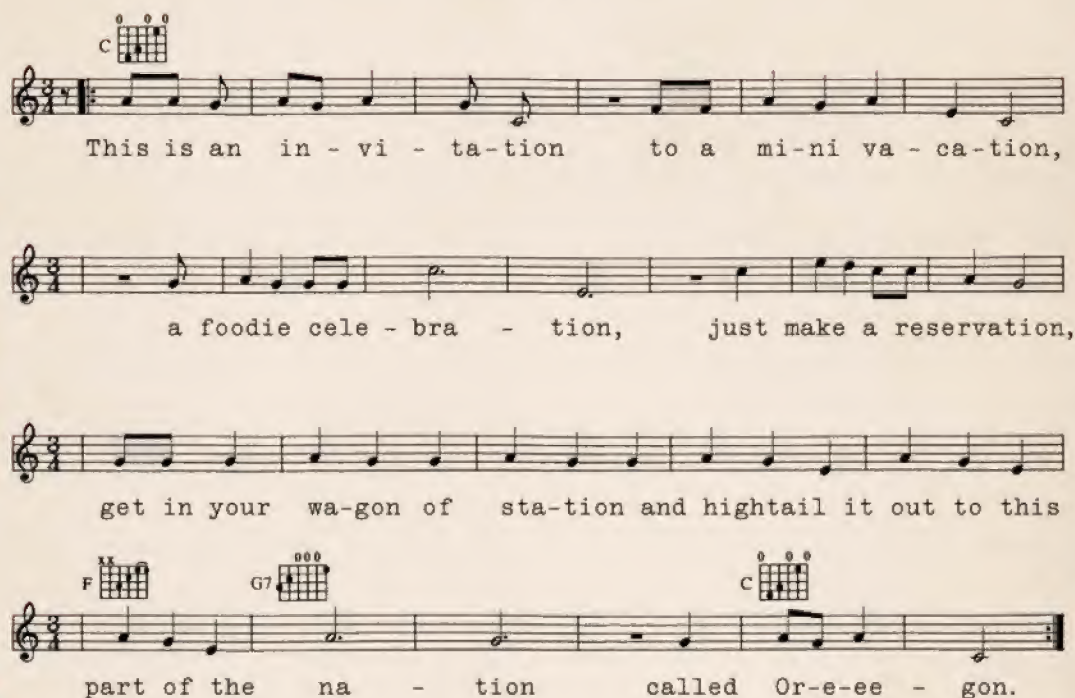
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American City

Among the world's great metropolises, Chicago won our hearts and appetites

I KNEW LITTLE about Chicago when I found out, in 1975, that my dad was moving our family there from our home in California. I'd heard of Lake Michigan and the Sears Tower (the world's tallest building at the time), and I was familiar with Bob and Emily Hartley (the lead characters on *The Bob Newhart Show*, the 1970s CBS sitcom set in the Windy City), but that's about as far as my knowledge went.

The city that I grew to love over the next two years, while we lived there, was thrilling in ways I hadn't expected. It had a terrific theater scene, world-class museums, and two great daily newspapers, the *Tribune* and the *Sun-Times*. The people I became friendly with, like Miss Guzzetta, an English teacher at my junior high school who insisted that I call her Sandy and introduced me to the joys of *Jane Eyre* and Shirley Jackson, were smart, easygoing, and self-deprecating—traits I later discovered to be typical of Chicagoans. And the foods I encountered—from the delicate

pork liver dumpling soup at a small German food shop in Schaumburg, northwest of the city, that my family used to frequent to the five-course meals we shared on special occasions at Le Perroquet, a downtown French restaurant that was considered one of America's top dining destinations—opened my palate to a world of new flavors. True, I spent my later growing-up years in San Francisco, but Chicago is where I left my heart.

So, a number of months ago, when the intrepid band of people that makes up the edi-


torial staff of SAVEUR was contemplating the idea of devoting a whole issue to a single city, Chicago was at the top of my list. (And it got the enthusiastic votes of other SAVEUR staffers, too, especially assistant editor Katherine Cancila and deputy editor David McAninch, both of whom grew up in the Chicago area.) We'd taken into consideration Paris, Rome, London, Hong Kong, and, yes, San Francisco—cities whose culinary reputations are widely known (and have been widely written about). But there

was something about big-shouldered Chicago that really grabbed our attention. First and foremost was the food: a panoply of tastes and traditions that ran the gamut, from the city's justly famous and lavishly topped hot dogs (see page 17 for a closer look at that classic street food) and its decadent deep dish pizza to its myriad immigrant cuisines, its legendary soul food, and the pioneering cooking of its endlessly creative chefs—including Charlie Trotter, SAVEUR contributing editor Rick Bayless, and Bruce Sherman of North Pond (see



The city of Chicago, as depicted on one of our well-thumbed and amply annotated maps.

page 60 to read Sherman's account of how Chicago inspired his own culinary journey). There was also something less tangible about the place that won us over—a warmth, honesty, and directness that struck us as uniquely, definitively American. It was a feeling that only got stronger when we set out, street maps in hand, to explore the city's gustatory landscape in preparation for this issue. Even if you haven't traveled to Chicago, it's our hope that, when you read the articles in the pages that follow, you'll be won over too.
—JAMES OSELAND, Editor-in-Chief



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FARE

News and Novelties from the World of Food, plus Agenda and More

The Originals

Chicago has long been a city of enterprise and innovation, especially when it comes to food. Here are three local culinary inventions that we think represent the city's deliciously entrepreneurial spirit.

THE JIBARITO Chicago's newest signature dish is a messy treat: seasoned skirt steak, sautéed onions, and cheese spill out from a sandwich composed of two crisp strips of fried plantains instead of bread. Juan Figueroa, who invented the dish in the mid-1990s at his restaurant, Borinquen, in Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood, says the jibarito (the name is Spanish for little hillbilly) was inspired by various recipes from his native Puerto Rico. Other versions of the sandwich have sprung up across town in recent years, some stuffed with roast pork or chicken. How does Figueroa feel about others' adapting his recipe? "I'm honored," he says. "It means I've finally made it."

SHRIMP DE JONGHE You won't find it in many cookbooks or in restaurants outside the Chicago area, but this delectable dish of butterflied shrimp stuffed with garlicky bread crumbs and baked to a golden crisp is one of the city's most enduring classics. The recipe was the creation of Belgian immigrant Henri De Jonghe, who opened his eponymous South Side restaurant in the 1890s. After De Jonghe's relocated downtown, it was shuttered because of a Prohibition-era police raid, but the dish lives on at many of Chicago's older Italian restaurants, like The Village, where it has been served since 1927.

THE CHICAGO-STYLE HOT DOG You haven't really tasted a hot dog until you've had Chicago's version: an all-beef wiener nestled into a soft, poppy seed bun and topped with sweet relish, mustard, a pickle spear, hot peppers, celery salt, fresh tomato wedges, and diced onions. The composition of this most beloved of Chicago foods is the result of a long evolution that reflects the city's rich ethnic makeup. The wieners and mustard were a gift of German immigrants, who started selling frankfurters between buns from pushcarts in the mid-19th century; the poppy seed buns, the pickles, and the preference for beef dogs over ones made with pork most likely owe to Jewish influence (in fact, many of the city's hot dog companies, like Vienna Beef, were founded by eastern European Jews); and you can thank the Greeks and Italians for the tomatoes, onions, hot peppers (referred to as "sport peppers", a marketing name for this peperoncino cousin), and relish (inspired by giardiniera pickles). No one seems to know who added the celery salt, but it's a tasty touch. —Dana Bowen and Katherine Cancila



Midwestern Beauties

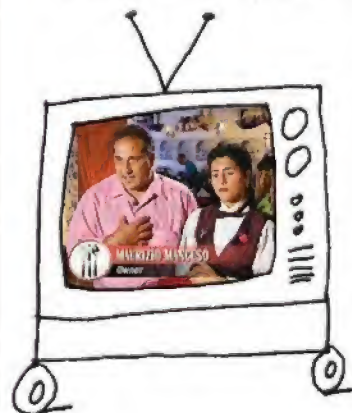
Jean Joho, the Alsace-born chef of Chicago's celebrated Everest restaurant, serves luscious raw-milk camembert, aged gruyère, and other old-world-style cheeses—none of which are from the Old World. "The Midwestern varieties taste similar, but they have their own personalities," says the chef, whose cheese plate is dedicated to locally produced favorites like the ash-ripened Wabash Cannonball (shown), one of a dozen goat cheeses from Capriole, in Greenville, Indiana, and Pleasant Ridge Reserve, a decadent Swiss-style cows' milk cheese from Uplands Cheese in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. Chicagoans have long enjoyed cheese from their dairy-land neighbors, especially Wisconsin, the nation's largest cheese producer, but chefs like Joho say regional variety and quality have bloomed in recent years. Farmstead cheese makers (who use milk from their own animals) like Judy Schad of Capriole helped kick-start a Midwestern artisanal-cheese movement in the late 1980s; today, there are many small-batch producers like Prairie Fruits Farm of Champaign, Illinois, who sell their coveted cheeses at Chicago farmers' markets and cheese shops. Specialty cheeses from the region's larger-scale producers—like Michigan-based Old Europe Cheese (which makes the herbaceous Reny Picot Camembert Fermier) and Roth Käse, in Wisconsin (known for its gruyère)—are garnering national attention. This year, two of the top three awards at the American Cheese Society's annual competition went to Midwesterners, and Carr Valley Cheese, a century-old company based in La Valle, Wisconsin, took home a whopping 28 awards, one for its robust, ten-year-old cheddar. Midwestern cheese makers, large and small, are grateful to chefs like Joho, who saw local potential early on. "Joho blazed the trail," says Schad, who started selling to him in 1984. "He was buying Midwestern cheese before most people were buying American." (See THE PANTRY, page 96, for sources.) —Dana Bowen

Everyone's a Critic

DESPITE ITS friendly owners and succulent Senegalese stews, two-year-old Yassa African Restaurant, on Chicago's South Side, was slated to close for lack of business in the fall of 2006. But at eight o'clock one Friday night, three people raved about the place on a television show called *Check, Please!*, which runs on the city's PBS affiliate, WTTW, and Yassa's future instantly brightened. "By nine p.m., you could not find a seat," says Madieye Gueye, the owner of the restaurant, which has since doubled in size.

Check, Please! is a Chicago-born show that has given a voice to the restaurant-going masses. The premise couldn't be simpler: each week, three real-life Chicagoans from diverse walks of life are invited to sing the praises and debate the merits of their favorite restaurant after each of them has dined at all three establishments with the show's host, Alpina Singh, a local sommelier. Now in its seventh season, *Check, Please!* is the highest-rated program on WTTW and has spawned a San Francisco spin-off, which won a 2006 James Beard Award. To date, some 20,000 area residents have applied to go on air and express their culinary opinions.

The show's immense popularity



FARE

not only speaks to Chicagoans' love for food; it also captures perfectly—more than any traditional restaurant review ever could—the city's inherently populist dining vibe. "The customer is ultimately the judge anyway," says longtime Chicago restaurateur Rich Melman (read more about him on page 28), who watches the show regularly. "Why not let them be the critics?"

Besides, it's good entertainment. Part Food Network, part talk show, part improv theater, the program starts by taking viewers inside restaurant dining rooms and kitchens and then gathers the guests in a studio to let them hold forth and, sometimes, have it out. Reality TV-style voyeurism constitutes part of the show's appeal: can a CEO, a cabdriver, and a punk music devotee find common ground over a Cuban restaurant's *ropa vieja*? "I like to put together three people that you'd normally not see dining together," says creator and executive producer David Manilow. Not surprisingly, passions and prejudices are frequently on display. In one memorable episode, a male model picked a raw-food restaurant, causing another guest—a skeptical septuagenarian and self-described steak lover—to mutter, "We found fire a couple million years ago, and I think they should use it."

Some guests pick trendy hot spots, but a majority come to the show with a beloved mom-and-pop joint in mind. "Chicagoans spend more time talking about restaurants as a whole instead of just focusing on the food," says Manilow. "They'll say, 'You should go there! The owners are so nice, and they have a great patio.'" In the end, a good review always comes down to the same thing, Manilow says: "I liked how the restaurant made me feel."

—Elaine Glusac

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2007

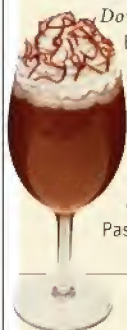
JULMARKNAD CHRISTMAS BAZAAR*Swedish American Museum, Chicago*

His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf, the king of Sweden (pictured at left), was present at this Chicago museum's opening, in 1976. Every holiday season, the center celebrates Swedish heritage with a festival featuring specialties like glögg, a potent spiced-wine punch, pepparkaka (heart-shaped ginger-snaps), and saffron buns. 773/728-8111.

FEBRUARY

9

2008

FOR THE LOVE OF CHOCOLATE SCHOLARSHIP BENEFIT*Downtown Loop, Chicago*

Escape the icy heart of winter by indulging in mousses, petits fours, and other chocolatey delights crafted by pâtissiers from restaurants like Charlie Trotter's and Tru at this event for the French Pastry School. 312/726-2419.

APRIL

27

2008

GREEK ORTHODOX EASTER*Greektown, Chicago*

With the arrival of Pascha, as the Greek Orthodox Easter holiday is known, Chicago's Greektown restaurants along South Halsted Street serve holiday dishes like spit-roasted lamb, sesame-studded tsoureki bread, lemony magritsa (a lamb soup), and red-dyed hard-boiled eggs (to symbolize the Passion of Christ). www.chicagogreektown.com.



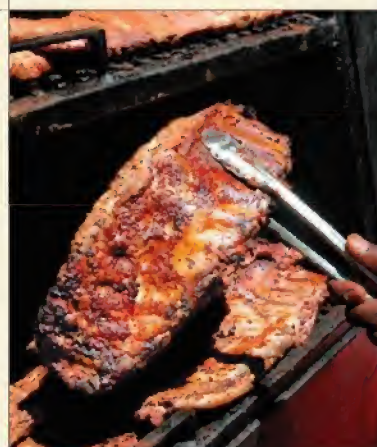
JUNE

7-8

2008

RIBFEST CHICAGO

Intersection of Damen Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, and Irving Park Road, Chicago For two days in June, Chicago's South Siders, who have long laid claim to having the city's best barbecue, can't help noticing droves of rib seekers heading to the North Side. This streetside celebration features live music and plenty of smoked brisket, pulled pork, and even gator on a stick. 847/677-8273.



JUNE - JULY

27-6

2008

TASTE OF CHICAGO*Grant Park, Chicago*

This ten-day urban picnic attracts more than 3.5 million food lovers to the lake-side park that Chicagoans have long considered their collective front lawn. Visitors buy food and drinks using paper tickets and navigate a miniature city of food tents, from which 70 restaurant vendors serve dishes from a staggering variety of cuisines. 312/744-3315.



100th

Anniversary

2008

FERRARA PAN CANDY COMPANY FOUNDED

Lemonheads, Red Hots, Atomic Fireballs: for all those tooth-chipping totems of childhood, you can thank Salvatore Ferrara, an Italian immigrant who, 100 years ago, opened the Chicago sweets shop that would become Ferrara Pan Candy Company. The "Pan" refers to rotating copper pans used to form candy with hard, shiny, sugary shells.

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

29-1

2008

TASTE OF POLONIA*Jefferson Park, Chicago*

The Copernicus Foundation, a nonprofit cultural institution, has organized this tasting event for the past 28 years to celebrate the heritage of Polonia, as Chicago's Polish community is called. Enjoy well-known specialties like pierogi, potato pancakes, and kielbasa alongside home-cooked dishes prepared by event volunteers. 773/777-8898.



DEEPLY DELICIOUS

The legendary heft of Chicago's deep dish pizza—that thick-crust, pan-baked concoction of meat, chunky tomato sauce, and other ingredients entombed in molten cheese—dates to 1943, when the founder of the original Pizzeria Uno (a Texan named Ike Sewell) introduced a pie he had designed to be a one-dish meal. Loosely based on Sicilian-style tomato breads, Chicago deep dish grew in density as it became more popular, but in recent years, a number of pizza purists have forsaken the belly bombs served in many downtown pizza parlors in favor of the leaner and fresher-tasting pies proffered at a pizzeria called Burt's Place, just north of the city in the suburb of Morton Grove.

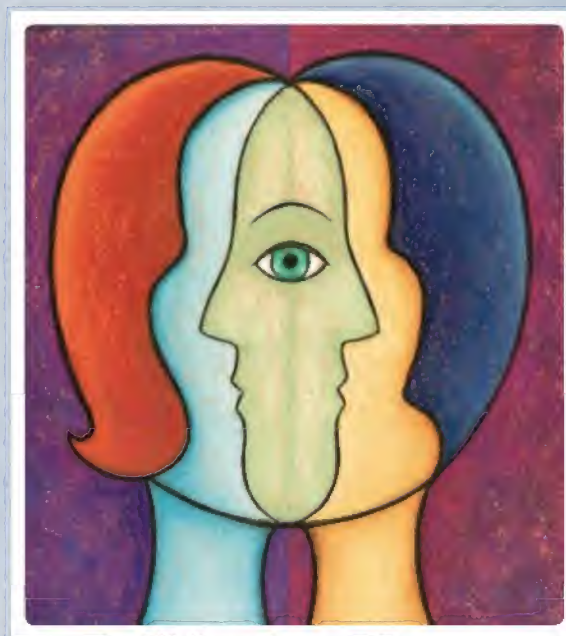
The pizzas, made with handpicked ingredients from local suppliers, may mark a welcome departure from tradition, but the establishment is decidedly old-fashioned. Located in a century-old former blacksmith shop on a residential street, Burt's is so difficult to find that town planners have mounted signs on nearby Lincoln Avenue to direct wayward pizza pilgrims. Inside, Burt Katz, the 70-year-old, amply bearded proprietor (he claims he last shaved on March 12, 1971, when he ditched his corporate day job), takes orders on an old rotary phone while perched in a brown vinyl booth. Above him hangs a canopy of curiosities: a three-foot-long whisk, a wooden propeller from a 1930s biplane, and a garland of ham radio operator licenses (given to him by customers over the 36 years Burt's has been open), among other things.

Katz is fond of spinning yarns from his murky but colorful past—a road trip across Asia in a 1962 Toyapet truck, drinking tea with Afghan politicians, spotting the late Mob capo Joey Glimco at a public steam bath—but his listeners know that the real legend is his pie. Katz wakes up at four in the morning to shop for his ingredients: Italian sausage made by a local butcher, mozzarella, and fresh vegetables. For the dough, which he makes multiple times a day, "there's no recipe," he says; just a memorized formula.

Baked in steel pans blackened by decades of use, his pies are shallower than most deep dish versions and emerge from the oven with a top crust of caramelized cheese and a crisp, flavorful bottom. The style, which Katz started to develop at pizzerias in the 1960s, is so unusual that fans around the country have asked on Internet food forums where they can find comparable pies (to which aficionados refer as Starback style, after the original name of Burt's Place). Tough luck: Katz continues to turn down franchise offers. —*Michael Nigrant*



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RECIPE

Lobster Thermidor

SERVES 4

- Salt, to taste
- 2 lobsters (about 1½ lbs. each)
- 2 cups milk
- 7 tbsp. unsalted butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 tsp. ground nutmeg
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- ½ lb. cremini mushrooms, quartered
- 1 cup white wine
- 1½ cups heavy cream
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped chervil
- ⅛ tsp. cayenne
- ½ tsp. dry mustard
- ½ lb. gruyère, grated

1. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add lobsters; boil for 5 minutes. Drain; halve each lengthwise. Remove and crack claws. Remove meat from bodies and claws; cut into chunks. Scrape shells' insides clean; set meat and shells aside.

2. Bring milk to a boil; set aside. Melt 4 tbsp. butter in a pan over medium heat. Add flour and cook until golden, 1-2 minutes. Add milk while whisking; increase heat to medium; boil. Cook, stirring, until thickened, 2-3 minutes. Add nutmeg and salt and pepper; keep sauce warm.

3. Heat broiler. Heat remaining butter in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add shallots; cook until golden, 1-2 minutes. Add mushrooms; cook until softened, 4-5 minutes. Add wine; cook until reduced by two-thirds, 4-5 minutes. Whisk in cream, chervil, cayenne, and reserved sauce. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook until thickened, 3-4 minutes. Add lobster; stir in mustard and ¾ cup cheese. Divide half of lobster sauce between shells; sprinkle remaining cheese over top. Broil lobster halves on a baking sheet until bubbly, 2-3 minutes. Serve with remaining sauce.

Old School

Once upon a time, Chicago's grand hotels—many of which date back more than a century, to when the city was an important railroad hub—were renowned not only for their luxurious accommodations but also for their fine dining. Today, most Chicagoans tend to associate good eating with anything but downtown hotels, yet one venerable establishment admirably upholds the tradition: the Cape Cod Room at the Drake Hotel. "I thought that the center of the world was in the Cape Cod Room when I first came here," says waiter captain Eustathios "Steve" Spanos (pictured, left, holding a plate of lobster thermidor), who has worked there since he arrived in Chicago from Greece in 1958. Built in 1933, the restaurant was the brainchild of the Drake's architect, Ben Marshall, who commissioned New England folk artist Peter Hunt to decorate the walls with chowder kettles, fishnets, and other piscine artifacts to evoke a clubby yet upscale aura. Softly glowing ships' lanterns illuminate tables draped in red-and-white-checked tablecloths, and waiters clad in navy blue jackets serve American classics like oysters rockefeller. "But a lot of people don't even open the menu," says Spanos. "They know what they want: lobster thermidor." The Cape Cod Room's signature dish features chunks of tender lobster and mushrooms swathed in a mustard-cream sauce, placed in a lobster shell, and broiled under a gruyère crust. The entrée hasn't changed since the restaurant opened, and we hope it never does. —Todd Coleman



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FARE

Mother-in-Law Mystery

IMAGINE A CHICAGO HOT DOG with all its accoutrements: poppy seed bun, neon green relish, sport peppers, and so on. Now ditch the wiener. Sub in a cornmeal tamale with a layer of pork or beef at the center, ladle chili on top, and you have what folks on the South Side of Chicago know, with slight variations, as a mother-in-law sandwich. Research by Amy Evans, a colleague of mine at the Southern Foodways Alliance, suggested that the sandwiches may be what happened to the Mississippi Delta's hot tamales after they landed in Chicago during the Great Migration (the period between the world wars when many Southern blacks relocated to Northern urban areas). But she hadn't scored any definitive answers regarding the coinage or origin, so I offered to fly north and investigate.

I set out with a clique of three Chicago food obsessives: Rob Lopata, a soybean futures trader; Peter Engler, a mouse genetics researcher; and Dr. Bruce Kraig, a credentialed historian who has written scholarly treatises on hot dogs and who has argued, convincingly, that Chicago's Colum-



The take-away window at Fat Johnnie's.

bian Exposition of 1893 may have marked the moment when encased meat and tamales first met and merged. At John's G.A.R., a curbside stand on 47th Street, we ate a mother-in-law and also a mom-in-law, a bunless variant served in a cup. Kraig didn't cotton to the food's cushiony texture, but I liked the grittiness of the cornmeal and how the vinegary peppers cut through the

delectably meaty grease. Later, at Veteran Tamale Foods and Tom Tom Tamales—longtime tamale manufacturers—we quizzed the staff about the name and came up empty, save for a theory posited by a worker at Veteran: "Mother-in-laws," he said with a knowing grin, "are hard to get along with; both the bun kind and the human kind have ferocious bites."

At Fat Johnnie's Famous Red Hots, a 35-year-old shack in Marquette Park, proprietor John Pawlikowski dismissed questions of provenance and steered me toward a father-in-law, which was smothered with liquid cheese. Better yet, he suggested a mighty dog. Unwrapping the latter's paper shroud revealed a bun-cradled tamale, split down the middle to accommodate a skin-on hot dog, which was dressed in the customary Chicago fashion. Making my case to Kraig, I compared the latter to a damp corn dog. (I intended to compliment.) The good doctor probably would have disputed the point, but his mouth was full. (See *THE PANTRY*, page 96, to find mother-in-law sandwiches.) —John T. Edge

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LIVES

The Entertainer

Meet the man who reinvented eating out in Chicago

BY JONATHAN BLACK

WE'RE RESTAURATEURS, not brain surgeons," Rich Melman tells me over lunch at Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab, a sprawling, upscale chophouse on Grand Avenue in Chicago's downtown Loop. Joe's is just one of the 130 restaurants that Melman has owned or co-owned in his 65-year lifetime. The tables around us are occupied by garrulous commodities traders, Michigan Avenue shoppers, and T-shirt-clad tourists; among them, Melman utterly fails to stand out. Boyish and dressed in sneakers and jeans, he looks anything but the boss of the place, let alone the restaurant baron who forever changed Chicago's dining culture. "We're not curing cancer," he continues, after taking a bite of his seafood salad. "You don't have to be a genius to be in this business."

There are those who would dispute Melman's modest self-assessment. In his 36-year career, he has earned a reputation as the godfather of themed dining, starting in 1971 with the pioneering R. J. Grunt's, the rollicking (and still thriving) burger joint in Lincoln Park that popularized the salad bar as we know it, and expanding his empire year after year with all-American favorites like Ed Debevic's (a 1950s-diner-themed restaurant in the Loop that became a chain) and Gino's Original Pizza (a downtown deep dish mecca) and with populist takes on ethnic and regional food: Café Ba-Ba-Reeba! (Spanish tapas) and Wow Bao (Chinese steamed buns). His ventures also include Everest and Tru, two of the ultra-high-end destinations for which Chicago is becoming increasingly famous. Today, Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, his Chicago-based restaurant consortium, is a national empire: the company owns, manages, or licenses more than 60 restaurants in five states and racks

up annual sales that exceed \$300 million.

That Melman is both from and of Chicago is not incidental to his success. By instinct as much as by choice, he launched his career by serving what the heartland had always wanted but, until places like R. J. Grunt's came along, lacked: good food that steers clear of haute pretense.

RICH MELMAN grew up in Logan Square, a neighborhood on Chicago's Northwest Side, and comes from an extended family of local restaurant and grocery entrepreneurs. He has an early memory of seeing lines snaking out of one of the family restaurants, a cafeteria across from Chicago's Civic Opera House; he eventually found out that its popularity had less to do with the menu than with the dice game his father and uncle ran inside. That foreshadowed what he learned on his own later on: that when it comes to a restaurant's success, serving decent food is only one way to draw crowds.

Melman worked briefly in the restaurant supply business in college and spent a couple of years as a restaurant manager before teaming up with a real estate agent named Jerry Orzoff to launch his first—and, to many, most influential—endeavor: R. J. Grunt's. When the establishment opened its doors, Chicago was basically a town of steak houses complemented by a few expensive French restaurants. Grunt's, by contrast, employed a macrobiotic cook, baked its potato skins instead of frying them, and featured an expansive salad bar, a first in Chicago. The crowd was young and boisterous, the cheeseburgers were juicy and perfectly charred, and the place was always packed. "It was geared for our friends," Melman tells me with a shrug when I ask how he arrived at such a successful formula.


Melman's friend Christie Hefner, CEO of Playboy Enterprises, which, like Melman, is rooted in Chicago and also tapped a previously underserved demographic, was slightly

less laconic when asked what she thought of him. "He transformed the Chicago restaurant scene," she said to me recently. "Between serious fine dining and kid-friendly franchises, there was nowhere fun for young adults to eat. He brought wit and novelty to restaurants."

Melman's ideas come from everywhere. He keeps a file bulging with magazine and newspaper clippings, takes research trips abroad, and never travels without a pencil and notebook. The idea for Hat Dance, a Mexican-Asian fusion restaurant in the River North neighborhood that was popular in the 1980s, grew out of a trip Melman took to Mexico, where one of the chefs he was traveling with pointed out the similarity between Mexican ceviche—raw seafood marinated in citrus juices—and Japanese sashimi. That gave Melman the ahead-of-its-time idea of marrying East Asian flavors and cooking techniques to other cuisines.

With his signature combination of conservatism and daring, Melman continues to prowl for new ideas while keeping a laser eye on the broad middle range of American tastes. "Chefs are always looking for the next exciting thing," Melman tells me, as the waiter brings dessert—a lemon-scented blueberry pie, which meets with the boss's guarded approval. "But that's not how the average person eats. They don't want to be surprised. They don't want to order a \$30 entrée and not like it."

Still, if one is to judge from Lettuce Entertain You's growing stable of restaurants, American tastes are expanding in every direction. The opening party of one of Melman's latest enterprises—Strip Burger, in Las Vegas—featured a stripper's pole with clothed men performing.

"Innovators like Rich usually max out on ideas," said Hefner, "but he has never stopped going." 

JONATHAN BLACK, a Chicago-based writer, is the author of *Yes You Can! Behind the Hype and Hustle of the Motivation Biz* (Bloomsbury, 2006).

Rich Melman at a publicity event for Ed Debevic's, a Chicago restaurant, in the early 1980s.



INGREDIENT

Let Them Eat Pâté

Notes from the foie gras underground

BY PETER SAGAL

IN APRIL 2006, CHICAGO—not Berkeley, not Santa Fe, not Northampton, Massachusetts—became the first city in the United States to ban the sale of foie gras. How, in the name of Upton Sinclair, could that have happened? This is a city that grew up, and grew rich, by being cheerfully cruel to animals on an industrial scale. This is a city with a vast and varied and hungry immigrant population, meaning they're cutting the heads off live ducks in Chinatown and doing things to the inside of a pig out in the Polish butcheries on Archer Avenue that you wouldn't wish on, well, a pig. But a French delicacy of fattened goose liver or duck liver? That offends our sensibilities? Makes you want to weep for a once great city, it does. Why, time was, you couldn't claim to have thrown a real Chicago shindig if you hadn't force-fed some animal through a metal tube and then butchered it to harvest its distended organs. Or, if no goose were handy, we'd do it to the guests. And, dammit, they liked it.

"Our city is better for taking a stance against the cruelty of foie gras," said Alderman Joe Moore, the city politician behind the measure.

"This is the silliest ordinance the City Council has ever passed," said Mayor Richard M. Daley.

"What about my hamburger?" said my wife, Beth, who just wanted her hamburger.

Specifically: the \$17 hamburger at Sweets & Savories, on Fullerton Avenue, which the menu describes as "Strube Ranch American Kobe beef with foie gras paté and truffled mayonnaise and toasted brioche roll" and which, when served with a side of duck-fat fries, is the kind of meal God would cook for houseguests if God were a 12-year-old kid.

Seventeen dollars is a lot to pay for a hamburger, especially one that does not come with a

toy in the bag, but a couple of things you should know are, first, that it is enormous, the size you remember your first Big Mac's being when you finally convinced your parents that you were old enough to graduate from McNuggets, and, second, that the heat from the beef melts the pâté, just a little bit, so it seems to absorb the truffle mayo above it and then ineluctably swirls into both the beef and the bread, infecting them with glory, the way Agent Smith converted everybody into himself in those awful *Matrix* sequels. The



result inspires guttural grunts of pleasure as you realize you must put the burger down, because if you don't, it will fall apart, but instead you take another bite *mmmmph mmmph mmmph*.

As Beth says, "It's yummy."

We went down to Sweets & Savories recently, about half a year after the ban went into effect. The restaurant is a converted storefront run by chef-owner David Richards, who is always visible by the stove in the back, cooking exactly what he wants, and what he wants to cook is foie gras, city of Chicago be damned. Or so we hoped.

"We came for the burger," I said to the waiter, trying to adopt the knowing manner of a gentleman knocking on the door of a speakeasy.

"Of course," he said.


"Is it still, you know...*the burger*?"

"It comes with all its...accessories," he said. It is possible he laid his index finger along the side of his nose.

He didn't have to be coy. There it is, right there on the menu. Like most chefs in Chicago, Richards thinks the foie gras ban is insane. His method of protest is simply to continue serving it, both on the hamburger and by itself, as "Seared Hudson Valley Foie Gras"—as stark and plain an act of civil disobedience as Gandhi's march to the sea. By contrast, the anti-foie gras protesters' method of protest is to actually protest, right outside the restaurant, with poster-size photos of tormented geese and custom-composed chants.

"It's the Animal Defense League," says Richards. "They showed up on weekends for over a month. Last Friday, my tenant upstairs started throwing water balloons at them. Then I think they decided to take the summer off."

He has not yet suffered the wrath of city hall for defying the ban. A complaint submitted to the city occasions a visit from a health inspector, and the first time she came, Richards says, they ended up having a "spirited discussion of the ban and other interesting political issues" while she poked about the kitchen, looking for contraband liver. One gets the sense that the inspector would rather have spent her time inspecting restaurants for less delicious violations, like rats. But it was one of the few days when there was no foie to be found, so Richards escaped a possible \$500 fine.

It is hard not to be sympathetic to the protesters—even compared with the other routine degradations involved in factory farming, force-feeding poultry is pretty harsh. And one wants to feel for the aldermen of Chicago, who, knowing their city is neither the entertainment capital nor the financial capital of the country, hoped to get some headlines by being the City Most Friendly to Poultry. But my feelings, and my allegiance, have been bought by a mere hamburger. Long live the *résistance*! But not, please, the goose. 

PETER SAGAL is the host of NPR's *Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!* and author of *The Book of Vice*, to be published this month by HarperCollins.

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ESSAY

Tomorrowland

What Kraft Macaroni & Cheese and Chicago's cutting-edge restaurants have in common

BY PETER MEEHAN

WHEN I WAS GROWING up in River Forest, a Chicago suburb, I ate hot dogs, hamburgers, and (if I was cooking) Kraft Macaroni & Cheese with unrelenting regularity. So, it was somewhat of a surprise, even to me, that part of my coming-of-age rebellion involved rejecting my mainly supermarket-supplied culinary upbringing. After I followed my girlfriend, Hannah Clark, to New York, we fed ourselves from our local farmers' market and spent weekends tackling the often complicated and always rewarding kinds of recipes they don't print on box tops. That Hannah's father, Dr. J. Peter Clark, was a food engineer who spent his days designing beef patties for McDonald's and race car-shaped corn chips for Frito-Lay only enhanced our sense of revolt.

But while I was distancing myself from the processed foods of my youth, a style of cooking inspired as much by Kraft as by craft was finding its way into some of the world's best restaurants. Following the lead of forward-thinking chefs like Ferran Adrià (in Spain) and Heston Blumenthal (in England), cooks around the world—those who might have, at one time, considered science to be a threat to honest-to-goodness food—were embracing technology as a tool to help them cook more creatively. And over the past few years, Chicago has become known to many as the North American capital of that movement, thanks in large part to chefs like Homaro Cantu of Moto and Grant Achatz of Alinea.

The fact that my hometown was earning a reputation as a center for avant-garde cooking struck me as more than a coincidence. The city has long been a hub for people, like Hannah's father, who work in the trenches of food technology. Many of the world's largest food manufac-

turing and food service companies—including Quaker, Sara Lee, McDonald's, and Kraft—are based here, as are the Institute of Food Technologists and the nation's largest regional chapter of the Research Chefs Association, whose members work for both restaurants and food companies. The quiet suburbs that surround the city are home to many high-tech research-and-development kitchens. (For a look at a few notable mass market foods developed in Chicago, see "Chicago's Taste for Invention," page 34.) I learned from Hannah's father that many of these businesses could trace their presence in Chicago to the vast stockyards that once dominated the city's commercial life and to the readily accessible bounty from nearby farms.

I knew that many respected chefs around the country, and in Chicago, had worked with accredited food scientists—not to produce shelf-stable versions of their namesake salad dressings to sell in supermarkets but to learn how to manipulate food in new ways—and that many of those scientists also consulted for Kraft and other local companies. And I knew that many chefs who cook in this modernist style have used processed foods in their restaurant dishes. I wondered whether there was a causal connection that linked Chicago's long-established industrial food culture to the imaginative cuisine being served in places like Alinea. Did some kind of crossover esprit de corps exist between chefs in pioneering restaurants and those in the processed-food business?

ARGUABLY, THE GRANDDADDY of Chicago's food giants is Kraft. The company was started in this city in 1903 by a farm boy named J. L. Kraft, who went on to devise a series of techniques for making processed cheese. Today, Kraft Foods, based in Northfield, Illinois, is one of the world's largest food conglomerates, with \$34 billion in annual sales and factories and branch offices in 155 countries. Its products

include everything from Kraft Macaroni & Cheese to Oreo cookies. And its research kitchens, in Glenview, a northern suburb, seemed as good a place as any to start my inquiry.

My guide was Harry Crane, an affable 60-year-old chef who manages Kraft's kitchens. As we walked through his work space, which looks like a series of Corian-countered residential kitchens strung together, Crane told me that he had met some of Chicago's most progressive restaurant chefs through his affiliation with the Research Chefs Association (he's on its executive board). As he described the nature of his work at Kraft, however, it didn't sound very scientific: he and his six-person team test, retest, and refine the simple, step-by-step recipes that appear on their products' boxes, bags, bottles, and jars. Their job is to ensure that the instructions are foolproof and yield consistent results. Crane's crew also suggest adjustments to the foods (which are developed at another facility) for improving their taste and texture.

"Say they're reformulating a barbecue sauce, and it's pretty close to being perfect," Crane told me. "They have two or three or four varieties; then we would maybe get involved, taste it, see if it performs the way we want it to." While most of Crane's staff come from a culinary background, they are comfortable with and clearly guided by the methodology of science: one woman, for instance, spends day after day baking frozen pizzas over and over again in ovens of different strengths, determining how many minutes each should be exposed to heat, in which part of the oven it should be cooked, and on what part of the sheet pan it should be placed. Still, there was little science of the test tube variety on display, even in the slightly flashier Kitchen of the Future, a showpiece facility down the block. There, I spotted standard induction ranges but none of

Alinea's nasturtium soup with clam and cucumber, served in a bowl codesigned by chef Grant Achatz.

PETER MEEHAN contributes regularly to the New York Times.



ESSAY

the high-tech devices that chefs are starting to bring into restaurant kitchens, like immersion circulators (used for sous-vide cooking, a slow-poaching, low-temperature technique) and food extruders (devices that force ingredient mixes into various shapes, like noodles).

When I prodded Crane for evidence of cutting edge-cooking, he told me that most of the hard-core scientific work went on in labs that are off-limits to outsiders for proprietary reasons. And when I asked him for examples in which his background as a trained cook with a knowledge of food science might benefit the products coming out of Kraft's kitchens, his answer had to do more with taste than with technology. He related a story about precooked bacon. Kraft's scientists had designed a way to package it at the ideal stage of crispness so that customers would only have to heat it in the microwave oven for 60 seconds before eating it: an impressive feat, indeed. "But tons and tons of people were calling in and wondering how to cook it in the oven

or skillet," he said. "So, we tested it, figured out how to do both, and now those directions are on the package." It was an interesting illustration, I thought, of how customers often reject technology when it shatters traditional notions of food and cooking. But is that always the case?

CHEF GRANT ACHATZ's restaurant, Alinea, where I'd booked a table that night, occupies a brick building on a busy downtown block of Halsted Street, opposite the Steppenwolf Theater. You enter the dining room through a dark, narrow hallway that conjures images of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory—the Tim Burton version of it, anyway. Achatz, who is 33 years old, has spent his life in kitchens: his parents were restaurateurs, and by his early 20s he was a sous-chef to Thomas Keller at the French Laundry, in Yountville, California. Everything I'd heard about his food pointed to the inquisitive mind of a cook who has spent years exploring the whys and what-ifs of cooking.

Here, I expected to encounter some of the mad-scientist food chemistry—or at least edible evidence of it—I'd been unable to find at the Kraft kitchens, spilling over into the dining room. After all, on his website, Achatz refers to PolyScience, a Chicago-area company that manufactures equipment used in large-scale food processing, as a "collaborator". I'd read that he'd worked with the company to invent what's known as the Anti-Griddle, which freezes food on contact instead of searing it. Indeed, most of the attention Alinea has received has been focused less on the food itself than on Achatz's embrace of novel technology and cooking techniques.

In this regard, Alinea did not disappoint: during my 27-course meal, I ate single-bite dishes that had the texture of meringue, made without the use of eggs (a trick enabled by methylcellulose, a chemical compound used by food companies to alter textures); lavender-scented air created with a vaporizer called a Volcano that contributed to the flavor of duck confit; a sliver of dehydrated tuna jerky; foods that went from piping hot to refreshingly cold between bites; and all manner of gelatinous elements achieved by methods natural and scientifically engineered.

In every instance, however, the most memorable aspect of each dish was, simply, that it was delicious. Dipping into a plate of monkfish—a silky scoop of the fish's liver, a crisp piece of fried flesh, and a meltingly tender filet—I realized that I had never understood the full potential of that fish, let alone that it paired well with bananas (present in pudding form). When I asked my waiter how one course was made—the black truffle "explosion", which tasted like the most incredible black truffle and parmesan pasta stuck inside a futuristic ravioli—he coyly replied, "Magic."

The answer—quite likely given because a tableside explanation of the chemistry behind the dish might disturb the mood—said a lot about how food science will probably always operate beyond most customers' grasp. Chicago's avant-garde cuisine and its industrial counterparts may have cross-pollinated, but a fundamental distinction separated the two worlds: that is, at places like Alinea, the science is celebrated if not entirely exposed; it is part of the overarching pleasure of the dining experience—the joy of revelation and shared discovery. Having eaten plenty of instant mac-and-cheese in my lifetime, I won't deny that the people at Kraft also successfully use science to make food taste good. But as my meal at Alinea wound down, it occurred to me that when I visited Kraft's kitchens, I hadn't been offered so much as a bite of anything.

Chicago's Taste for Invention

Chicagoland has long been a hub for food manufacturing. Below are a few pioneering local discoveries that revolutionized the ways food is made and eaten, at home and in restaurants.

1868

The invention of the first steam-powered meat chopper permits sausage makers—a growing niche in Chicago's meatpacking industry—to automate production. Fifteen years later, **Oscar Mayer**, a German immigrant and butcher, will put the technology to use at his new Chicago meat factory.

1896

Louis Rueckheim, a Chicago street vendor whose brother introduced the molasses-coated popcorn-and-peanut confection known as **Cracker Jack** at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago three years earlier, develops a process for preventing the morsels from sticking together, removing the final impediment to success.

1911

Joy Morton, owner of Chicago's Morton Salt Company,

discovers that adding magnesium carbonate to table salt permits it to pour freely, even in humid weather. Three years later, the **Morton Umbrella Girl** mascot is born.

1915

Chicago entrepreneur **James Lewis Kraft** invents a technique for making shelf-stable "process" cheese (a precursor to Velveeta)



by continually stirring melted cheese over steady heat, then pouring the mixture into sterile containers so that it regains its solidity as it cools.

1933

J. L. Kraft's company introduces a sandwich spread called **Miracle Whip** at the Chicago World's Fair. Kraft scientists created the product with a patented whip-



ping and emulsifying process that remains secret to this day.

1960s

Innovations in **dehydration** lead to the flavoring packets and dried seasonings in instant soups and stuffing mixes, including Stove Top, which was introduced by Kraft in 1972. Fast-forward 40 years, and Rick Tramonto, of the Chicago restaurant Tru, is dehydrating beets, fennel, and other ingredients, then pulverizing them into powders.



1990

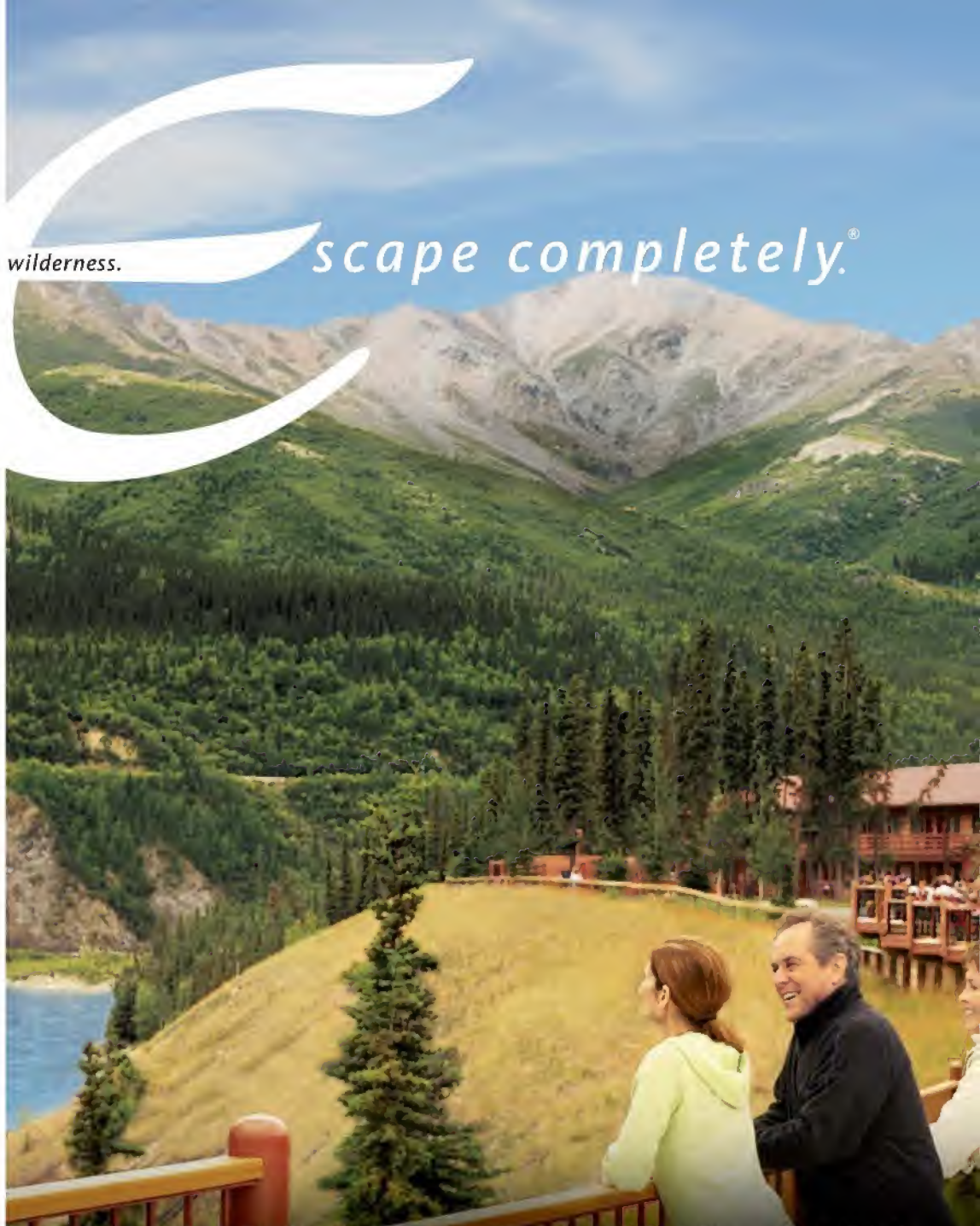
Decades after **sous-vide cooking**, a method of slow-poaching foods in vacuum-sealed bags, is invented in France by adapting techniques first applied to industrial foods, Chicago chef Charlie Trotter, realizing that it locks in flavor and preserves texture, begins using the method in his restaurants. —Janine Passarello



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SOURCE

State Street Sweet

Frango mints aren't native, but their spirit is pure Chicago

BY DANNY MILLER

I AM A THIRD-GENERATION Frango mint lover. For nearly 80 years, members of my family have been hooked on these mint-infused chocolates, which for decades were made and sold at Chicago's Marshall Field's department store. My grandmother, a Kentucky native who settled in the city after World War I, used to nibble them slowly, savoring every tiny morsel as if it were a wartime ration. My mother, who grew up near Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, devoured them in one or two businesslike bites. I like to place the entire cube in my mouth and let it dissolve slowly as the milk chocolate outer layer gives way to the minty truffle center.

Given that Frango mints are considered a Chicago institution—in 1999 Mayor Richard M. Daley protested mightily when demand forced Marshall Field's to outsource production to Pennsylvania—many Frangophiles may be surprised to learn that the confection didn't originate there. In fact, the first Frango wasn't even made of chocolate. In the early 1920s, the Seattle-based Frederick & Nelson department store created a frozen, maple-flavored dessert called the Frango, the name purportedly being an amalgam of *Frederick* and *tango* (a nod to the dance, which was popular at the time). Several years later, the store's candymaker added to its growing line of Frango desserts a delectable chocolate-mint truffle, which soon became one of the store's most popular sweets.

When Marshall Field's purchased Frederick & Nelson, in 1929, the store insisted that the secret recipe for the Frango mint be included in the deal. A huge kitchen was set up on the 13th floor of the Marshall Field's flagship store, on State Street, to make the sweets. The facility employed more than a hundred workers, who melted slabs of chocolate and mixed in the additional ingredients, including the mint flavoring. After the mixture had cooled on a white marble slab, workers cut it into individual pieces and placed them on a conveyor belt that passed through an "en-robing" machine, which applied the outer coating of chocolate.

When Macy's acquired Marshall Field's in 2006, the retail giant affirmed its commitment to the beloved sweet, announcing plans to bring a portion of the production of Frangos back to the Windy City. Today they come in a range of flavors, from dark chocolate to raspberry. For purists like me, though, such variations are unnecessary—just give me an old-fashioned Frango mint, and I am the picture of contentment.

Frango mints are available in one-pound boxes for \$17, two-pound boxes for \$32, and five-pound boxes for \$68. To order, call 800/289-6229 or visit www.macys.com.





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CLASSIC

A Sandwich to Dress Down For

Chicago's Italian beef isn't for dainty eaters

BY CAROL MIGHTON HADDIX

THE UBIQUITOUS CHICAGO street food known as Italian beef is, after the hot dog, my home city's favorite sandwich. A French or Italian roll piled with thinly sliced roast beef drenched in *jus* and often topped with pickled peppers, the Italian beef sandwich requires two hands, plenty of napkins, and, frequently, a repertoire of minor acrobatics for catching every last drip. The sandwich can be found at "beef stands" all over the city and in the suburbs; Mr. Beef, Johnnie's Beef, and Al's #1 are three perennial favorites.

No one is quite sure where the Italian beef sandwich got its start. It most likely has its roots in the Depression years, when roast beef was a costly luxury and people looked for ways of making a little go a long way at banquets and weddings. Slicing the meat very thinly and piling it loosely on a roll or a plate was a favored method. In the years following World War II, Chicago-area meatpacking firms such as the Scala Packing Company, on the Near North Side, picked up on this trend and began selling presliced roast beef to local restaurants, where early versions of the sandwich were presumably born.

These days, the roast—most often sirloin tip or rump—from which Italian beef sandwiches are made is usually rubbed with dried herbs like oregano and basil, as well as garlic and chile flakes, before it's cooked, to produce a spicy and intensely savory *jus* (which Chicagoans generally refer to as "gravy").

The typical beef stand is short on decor, and many devotees of the sandwich eat theirs leaning against a stand-up counter. It's advisable to know what you want to order beforehand, and a grasp of the lingo is key. The words to remember are *dry*, *wet*, *hot*, *sweet*, and *combo*. Order your Italian beef dry, and you'll get the meat on a dry



roll. Order it wet, and your server will dunk the entire sandwich in the gravy. Next, you have to decide between hot and sweet. Choosing hot gets you a topping of peppers or giardiniera, a spicy relish of chiles, celery, and vinegar; asking for sweet gets you a topping of cooked, sliced green bell peppers. At this point your sandwich will be handed to you wrapped in the customary white deli paper—unless you demand a combo, which has grilled Italian sausages in the mix. Overkill? Not for the hundreds of cabbies, cops, and white-collar warriors I regularly see chowing down on such sandwiches all over town.

Plenty of Chicagoans have learned to prepare Italian beef at home. The recipe on this page calls for making your own giardiniera, but store-bought versions are available. Substitute green bell pepper strips for hot peppers, if you like. You may even want to use a knife and fork, though I've always found that Italian beef tastes better when eaten with the hands, standing up. 🍴

RECIPE

Italian Beef Sandwiches

SERVES 6

The best way to achieve the ultrathin slices of beef that are de rigueur for this sandwich is to freeze the roasted beef after cooking it, then thaw it slightly before slicing it with an electric knife.

- 1 tsp. red wine vinegar
- 3 pickled peppers, preferably sport, stemmed and thinly sliced (see page 96)
- 3 ribs celery, thinly sliced
- 1 small jalapeño, stemmed and thinly sliced (optional)
- 1 tbsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tsp. dried basil
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 trimmed beef sirloin tip roast (about 2½ lbs.)
- 6 Italian rolls, split and warmed

1. Stir together the vinegar, peppers, celery, jalapeños, half the pepper flakes, and salt and pepper to taste in a bowl to make a relish. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

2. Heat oven to 425°. Combine remaining pepper flakes, basil, oregano, garlic, and salt and pepper to taste in a bowl. Place roast in a roasting pan; rub with half the spice mixture. Roast for 20 minutes; reduce heat to 350° and roast for 20 minutes more. Combine remaining spice mixture with 1 quart water; add to roasting pan. Continue roasting until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part reads 130°, 20–30 minutes. Transfer roast to cutting board; let cool slightly. Skim fat from broth.

3. Cut beef into thin slices. Reheat broth and beef together. Pile beef (with some of the broth) onto rolls, top with relish, and serve. For a "wet" version of the dish, dip the entire sandwich into broth before serving.

CAROL MIGHTON HADDIX is the food editor of the Chicago Tribune.



LISTEN CAREFULLY AS NOTES OF DARK CHERRY, DRIED FIG
AND WELL-AGED RED WINE GRACIOUSLY INTRODUCE THEMSELVES.

EXTRA DARK

Photographs by

André Baranowski, Penny De Los Santos, Ben Fink, Larry Nighswander, and Landon Nordeman

Chicago

Why? Because it's got a big heart and a bigger appetite. Because it's got global tastes and neighborhood loyalties. Because it's old-fashioned and cutting-edge and everything in between. Because it's home to one of the fastest-changing urban food scenes in the country. Because this diverse city of 3 million people is the truest expression of everything we love about eating.

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Facing page, top row, left to right, pizza at Burt's Place, smoked fish from Calumet Fisheries, a sign at Donald's Famous Hot Dogs; middle row, sweets at Sukhadia's, rib tips at Lem's Bar-B-Q, the dining room at Topolobampo; bottom row, cooking at North Pond, pork at Krakus deli, a cook at Bobak's.



Heartland of the World

You've attained gastronomic heights, Chicago, but your roots go deep

IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT THE writer Nelson Algren, were he alive today, would scarcely recognize the town he called a “drafty hustler’s junction”, for if the Chicago of Algren’s mid-20th-century heyday was a collection of hard-bitten neighborhoods ruled by parochial tastes, the present-day city is inarguably a world-class metropolis. This former stockyard town that rose from swampland between the prairie and the inland sea of Lake Michigan has shed its unglamorous reputation and come of age. And nowhere is its transformation more pronounced than in the realm of food. Over the past few years, Chicago has become a magnet for avant-garde chefs and is now home to temples of

innovative cuisine—the celebrated restaurants Alinea, Moto, and Schwa among them—that have earned a level of culinary cachet previously seen only in New York, Paris, or London. But the city’s kinetic food culture amounts to more than a restaurant revolution; in fact, it has less to do with the city’s clout as a gastronomic destination than it does with the increasingly varied backgrounds and appetites of the people who live there.

And yet, beneath these new layers of identity still lives Algren’s gritty streetscape of Greek diners, Italian beef stands, and Irish taverns—legacies of early waves of immigration. That these old standbys continue to thrive alongside the city’s three-figure tasting menus points both to Chicagoans’ cosmopolitanism and, more important, to their unpretentiousness. As Alex Kotlowitz writes in *Never a City So Real*, a 2004 collection of essays about the city, “People [here] are taken

for who they are, not for what they have or haven’t achieved.”

I was born and raised in Chicago, and my return visits to family there have usually centered around meals at favorite childhood haunts like the venerable Berghoff restaurant and the chop-houses popular with my parents’ generation. So, when I recently went back to explore Chicago, it appeared to me a place reborn: warmly familiar and ever welcoming, but as diverse and audacious as any city I’ve known.

IF CHICAGO IS, as the writer and documentarian Studs Terkel wrote, “America’s dream, writ large”, then the Super H Mart, in the near-north suburb of Niles, is the incarnation of that theory. I’d decided to start my Chicago journey in the northern reaches of the city, and I’d heard from a friend that this massive, spanking-new supermarket, located in a nondescript commercial strip of big-box

stores and chain restaurants, had to be seen to be believed.

The immaculately clean, high-ceilinged Super H Mart (which is owned by the HanAhReum Group, a company based in New York) was a city unto itself. It took me the better part of an hour to gawk my way through the produce section alone: a mound of bitter melons sat near neatly stacked romaine lettuces; nubs of fresh turmeric vied for space with blushing ripe tomatoes. The meat counter, tended with brisk efficiency by uniformed workers, was flanked by vast refrigerated cases containing presliced rib-eye steaks (for Korean bulgogi), oxtail, pigs’ feet, beef knuckle, frozen whole duck and pheasant, and more. The shoppers at the Super H Mart appeared to be mostly people of Korean and Chinese descent, but I also saw whites, blacks, and South Asians pushing their carts

through the aisles, trailing toddlers and spouses as they plucked items off the shelves, which groaned with a staggering variety of goods, from Oscar Mayer Lunchables to dried bracken fern and lily flower. The megamart ambience and piped-in pop music were pure Americana, but the food was all over the map.

A ten-minute drive south and east took me to West Devon Avenue, a principal artery for several neighborhoods in Chicago’s northern tier. The two- and three-story brick and masonry buildings that stretch east along the street toward Lake Michigan constitute Chicago’s densest concentration of international shops and restaurants—a thoroughfare that plunges through one ethnic turf after another: eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Russia, Central Asia, India, and on and on. At the 3 Sisters Russian delicatessen, just down the street from the New York Kosher grocery and catercorner from the Croatian Cultural Center, I scrutinized handwritten signs in Cyrillic hanging above cold cases of smoked herring. One block east, just past an Afghan kebab house, the Argo Georgian bakery served me a flaky cheese pastry called khachapuri. Down the street at Sukhadia’s, an Indian (continued on page 46)

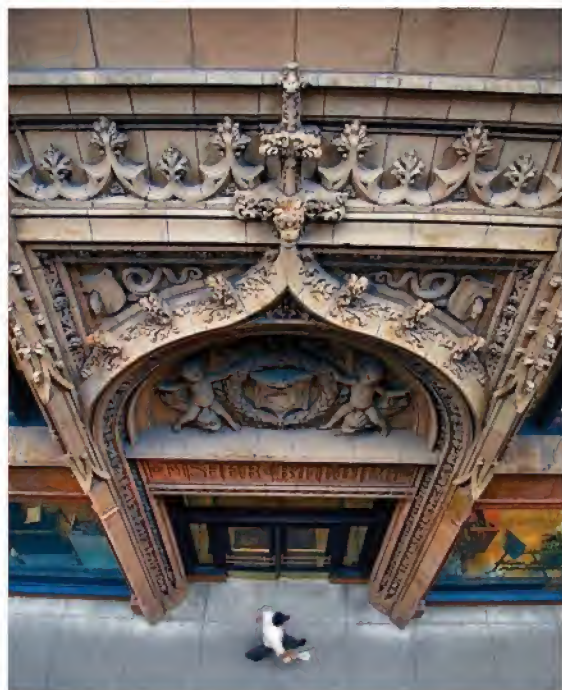
Daniel Hopson, a worker at Helen’s restaurant, on Chicago’s South Side.





A produce stall at New Maxwell Street Market. Facing page, from top, dumplings at Argo Georgian Bakery, under the El, Lake Michigan sunset.





Above, clockwise from top left: the Fisher Building in Chicago's downtown Loop; a staircase to the El, the city's elevated public transportation system; pleasure seekers at North Avenue Beach.

(continued from page 42) sweets shop that has branches in New York and New Jersey, I stood before a giant menu board that offered dozens upon dozens of cakes, shakes, and savory snacks. The colorful, neat decor and uniformed counter staff evoked Baskin-Robbins, but the

menu was uncompromisingly authentic. I ordered a channa poori, an onion-and-tomato chickpea curry served with a fried flatbread; the flatbread was feather light, and the chickpeas were exuberantly flavored with ginger and garam masala.

As I made my way south from

Devon Avenue to Bucktown, the neighborhood where I planned to have dinner that night, it occurred to me that nearly everyone I talked to in Chicago—shopkeepers, friends, aunts, uncles—seemed to be a font of shopping and eating recommendations: a great Viet-

namese butcher in Uptown, say, or a trick for getting a reservation at Moto, chef Homaro Cantu's modernesque marvel of a restaurant. It caused me to reflect anew on how much the city had changed.

TO SAY THAT Chicago hasn't always been the dining mecca it is today would be understating the truth. During the corruption-fraught reign of the late and much memorialized Richard J. Daley, who ruled city hall from 1955 to 1976 and was the father of the city's current mayor, Chicago's restaurant scene was limited largely to coffee shops, steak houses, private clubs, and a few fancy French and Italian places. Today, by contrast, a variegated restaurant culture thrives in the city. This renaissance has generated its share of hype, but I saw little of that in evidence at Scylla, the restaurant, tucked into a brick town house, that a friend had suggested for dinner. True, the wordy menu descriptions aroused suspicion: the entrée I ordered, for instance, was a grilled lamb sirloin with new-potato cake, artichoke *jus*, strawberry compote, and a caper vinaigrette. But when it arrived, my suspicion evaporated: all the elements were harmoniously realized, with no single ingredient overpowering the others.

Over drinks the following evening at a North Side tavern, I asked Meade Crampton, a cousin of mine who, like many Chicagoans these days, always seems to have food on the brain, whether she and her friends even bothered to eat hot dogs in this town anymore, given the immense range of options now at hand. "All the time," she said. "Usually, if we really want to go old-school, we head south."

Most of the city's vast South Side—a sprawling patchwork of mostly working- and middle-class neighborhoods that are home to half of Chicago's residents—was

terra incognita to me. So, the next morning, I got in the car and began edging my way in that direction along streets flanked by modest wood-frame bungalows and the occasional faded cocktail lounge. On South Archer Avenue, I bought a \$3 bowl of thick beef chili at an 83-year-old establishment called Lindy's. "We've been using the same recipe for all these years," said the short, sweatshirt-clad woman behind the counter. A little while later, I stopped for a snack at a take-out joint called Donald's Famous Hot Dogs. A sign by the order window read "Owner is the fussiest eater alive". I ordered a fully dressed Chicago dog, and a single bite summoned forth vivid childhood memories of that quintessential Chicago treat.

As I pushed farther south and east toward the Indiana border, smokestacks and the soaring, traffic-choked Chicago Skyway came into view. Crossing a drawbridge over the Calumet River at East 95th Street, I spotted a sign that said "Calumet Fisheries" on the wall of a squat structure just off the roadway. Smoked salmon steaks were cooling on a huge iron rack outside. I pulled over, went inside, and ordered a small paper bag of smoked, shell-on shrimp from a man in his 50s who introduced himself as Ray Campos. He told me that Calumet Fisheries had been around since the 1920s. "Back in the '60s," he said, "we'd get a lot of Swedes, Germans, and Poles from the steel mills; they loved smoked fish."

I took my food outside and leaned against the bridge railing, peeling and eating one shrimp after another and gazing at the old factories lining the river. I tried to picture this rusted industrial landscape, so far removed from the downtown Loop's glitz, when it was in full swing decades ago. Change of a different sort had come to this swath of the city, I thought. But then, nothing stays the same in Chicago for long. —DAVID MCANINCH

City of Pork

Chicago's Polish butchers elevate the humble pig to a smoked and cured art form

ON SATURDAY MORNINGS, you have to wait for what seems like an eternity to place your order at the deli counter in Bobak's, a Polish supermarket out by Midway Airport, on Chicago's Southwest Side. And when the woman behind the counter calls your number in Polish, you'd better know exactly what you'd like, lest she catch someone else's eye and move on. During my first visit, I got passed over for a man with a handlebar mustache who asked for four samples of different

sausages before requesting a mere pound of one. Then a young woman muscled forth, pointing to the chunk of smoked pork butt she wanted to take home. When I finally worked up the nerve, I carefully asked for boczek myśliwski, or

hunter-style bacon. (I'd rehearsed the pronunciation—boh-CHECK mish-LIV-ski—a few dozen times in my head beforehand.) The worker surprised me by answering in crisp English, "Do you want that sliced or slab?"

I had come to Chicago to taste the many things the city's famous Polish delis and butchers do with pork, and I was getting off to a good start. When I cooked it up later that afternoon, the bacon—double smoked and meaty, with ribbons of aromatic fat that melted on the tongue—was unlike anything I'd eaten. Returning to Bobak's the next day, I gazed at dozens of varieties of kielbasa dangling from hooks behind the counter, some reddish with crinkled rinds, others in slender loops, and still others labeled with signs that indicated regional provenance (krakowska,



Above, from left, the signature pig logo on a wall at the Bobak's supermarket; an employee at Kurowski Sausage Shop, on Chicago's Milwaukee Avenue, weighing a customer's order.

RECIPE

Bigos

(Sauerkraut and Smoked Pork Stew)

SERVES 8

Bigos, or hunter's stew, is one of Poland's national dishes.

- 1/4 oz. dried porcini mushrooms
- 1/4 lb. smoked bacon, cut into 1" pieces
- 2 oz. fatback, cut into 1/2" cubes
- 1/2 lb. boneless pork butt, cut into 1" pieces
- 1/2 lb. smoked kielbasa, cut into 1" pieces
- 1/3 lb. smoked pork shoulder, cut into 1" pieces
- 6 whole allspice
- 2 dried bay leaves
- 2 large yellow onions, chopped
- 6 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 tbsp. flour
- 4 lbs. sauerkraut, roughly chopped; rinsed, if you like
- 1/2 cup red wine
- 6 cups beef stock
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Chopped fresh parsley

1. Put mushrooms and 1 1/2 cups water into a bowl; let soften for 1 hour. Drain and reserve water.

2. Heat oven to 350°. Cook bacon and fatback in a large pot over medium heat until crisp, 8-10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a plate. Add pork butt, kielbasa, and pork shoulder and increase heat to medium-high; cook until browned, 12-14 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer meat to a plate. Add allspice, bay leaves, and onions; cook, scraping up browned bits, until softened, 8-10 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook until browned, 8-10 minutes. Add flour; cook for 2 minutes. Add mushrooms and sauerkraut to pot. Cook for 12-14 minutes. Add mushroom water, bacon-pork mixture, wine, and stock; boil. Season with salt and pepper to taste; cover pot with foil and a lid. Braise in oven until meat is tender, about 1 hour. Divide stew between bowls and garnish with parsley.





Above, from left, butcher Robert Bielowicz removes racks of pork ribs from a storage room at Krakus deli; gołąbki z grzybami (stuffed cabbage rolls) are topped with a mushroom-sour cream sauce.

poznanska, and so on). When I was a kid growing up on Long Island, in New York, my Polish grandfather never hinted that a world existed beyond the Hillshire Farm kielbasa we ate with Mrs. T's pierogi. Years later, I got the occasional taste of better Polish sausage (made with natural casings, sparkling with spice, free of fillers) from New York City's Polish delis and on visits to Poland, but it wasn't until my sister moved to Chicago and I started pork shopping there that I fully realized what I'd been missing.

In Avondale, a neighborhood in northwestern Chicago that's known by local Poles as Jackowo, and in other Polish enclaves, there are tiny delis, like Stanley Sausage Shop and Liquor on West Belmont Avenue, that make meats such as polędwica, a satiny, smoked pork loin. Along Milwaukee Avenue—a major artery, lined with Polish businesses, that extends diagonally across the city's northern reaches—are scores of butchers and grocers,

each with a particular specialty: at Staropolska, for example, it's smoked ribs smothered with caramelized onions, from a recipe that the butcher Ludwig Jacek says he developed while learning the art of smoking meats in the Polish city of Opole. And on the fringes of Chicago and in the suburbs, where more than half of

Carl Sandburg's famous moniker for Chicago, "Hog Butcher for the World", rings enduringly true

the state's roughly 900,000 citizens of Polish ancestry (a majority of them first generation) live, you can find supermarkets connected to sausage factories where meaty stuffed cabbage rolls and peppery pork burgers are sold from behind steam table counters and where traditional Polish butchery—from headcheeses to pork ears—is the norm. Beholding all this and

more, I marveled at the fact that the poet Carl Sandburg's famous moniker for Chicago—"Hog Butcher for the World"—rings so enduringly true.

STAN BOBAK, the 43-year-old owner of Bobak's Sausage Company, knows how to woo a lover of the pig. "This is the good stuff," he said, handing me a piece of kabanos, a crinkled, slender sausage that delivered a taste of pepper and caraway. Even though Bobak's—which offers around a hundred varieties of meats and sausages—sells shrink-wrapped kielbasa for 99 cents a pound, it also makes sausage the old-fashioned way, allowing it to air-cure in unrefrigerated rooms. "There are rules in this country that prohibit this," Stan told me, "but here in Chicago, everyone just looks the other way."

We were walking through the maze of rooms where the sausage is made—one for seasoning and grinding various cuts of pork, another in which 20 or so men twist the sausages into links, and

RECIPE

Gołąbki z Grzybami

(Stuffed Cabbage Rolls)

SERVES 8

The porcini mushrooms in this recipe are substituted for prawdziwki, a similar Polish variety.

- 2 oz. dried porcini mushrooms
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 3 celery ribs, finely chopped
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 2 lbs. ground pork
- 2 cups cooked medium-grain white rice
- 1 tbsp. dried parsley
- 1 egg
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 heads green cabbage, cored and halved
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 1 cup sour cream
- Chopped fresh dill

1. Put mushrooms and 1 quart water into a bowl; let soften for 1 hour. Meanwhile, heat butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add celery and onions; cook until golden, 10–12 minutes. Let cool; transfer to a large bowl. Add pork, rice, parsley, egg, and salt and pepper to taste; stir well. Cover and refrigerate.

2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add cabbage; cook until outer leaves are soft, 8–10 minutes. Remove leaves; cut away thick vein. Scoop 2–3 tbsp. filling into middle of each leaf, roll up, and fold in ends; secure with toothpicks.

3. Put mushrooms with their water into a pot; cook over medium heat until very soft, 8–10 minutes. Whisk in flour and sour cream; purée sauce in a blender. Arrange cabbage rolls in a wide pot in 2–3 layers; pour sauce over rolls. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, covered, until cooked through, about 2 hours. Uncover; cook until thickened, 25–30 minutes. Transfer rolls to a large plate and remove toothpicks; keep warm. Return pot to medium heat; cook sauce, whisking often, until thickened, 20 minutes. Pour sauce over rolls; garnish with dill.

yet another containing the heart of the operation: the 15-foot-high smokers in which most of the meats from Bobak's undergo their transformation. Bags of wood chips were arranged against the wall, as were stacks of oak logs, used for the slow, low-temperature smoking that yields intensely flavorful meat. This is what Bobak's is famous for: the heavily smoked bacons and sausages that are typical of Poland's southern highlands.

Talk with Stan Bobak long

enough, and sooner or later the conversation rolls around to Zakopane, the town in the mountainous highland region near Poland's Czech border where his father was born. Chicago's Highlander community is a tight one, he told me, and has long relied on the social clubs and organizations that help new immigrants get situated and find jobs. When Stan's father, Frank, came over in the 1960s, he found work, as many Poles did, in the city's vast

stockyards, where a majority of the country's pork was processed or distributed at the time, and he moved the family to the nearby neighborhood known as Back of the Yards. At night, Frank would make small batches of sausage in his garage, setting the links and coils in a small brick smoker.

Eventually the family opened a deli in Jackowo, followed by several others around town. In 1975 the Bobaks bought their first plant and started wholesaling, and in 1989 they built the store and factory where we were standing now. The neighborhood, known as Garfield Ridge, has a large Highlander population. "In a way," Stan said, "it felt like we were coming home."

Stella, Stan's wife—who was born near Zakopane and met Stan in a Highlander dance class when they were in their teens—told me that she rarely makes dishes that don't include pork in one way or another, whether it's the rib meat in żurek, a rye-flour soup, or the smoked pork shoulder in bigos,

METHOD

Schab Pieczony z Powidłami

(Plum-Stuffed Pork Loin)

In this dish, pork loin, a lean cut, is wrapped in bacon to moisten and flavor the meat while roasting. Squeeze juice and pulp from 2 oranges. Transfer pulp to a bowl; reserve juice. Mix 2 tbsp. chopped marjoram leaves and 4 finely chopped cloves garlic with the pulp. Put a 3-lb. boneless pork loin into a dish and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste; rub with pulp mixture. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours. Heat oven to 350°. Using handle of a wooden spoon, bore a 1½" hole lengthwise through middle of pork. Stuff hole with 16 dried pitted plums. Wrap pork with 14 slices smoked bacon so they overlap slightly; secure with toothpicks. Transfer pork loin to a roasting pan; add reserved orange juice and ½ cup white wine and roast, basting occasionally, until cooked through, about 1 hour. Let rest for 10 minutes, remove toothpicks, and slice. Serves 6–8.



Above, from left, bacon-wrapped, plum-stuffed pork loin as served in the restaurant at the Garfield Park outlet of Bobak's; one of the many house-made pickles sold in the adjoining store.

Polish Pork Primer

1 Szyszkowa A mixture of fine and coarsely ground lean pork seasoned with garlic, this sausage (identical to the more commonly found *krakowska*, except for the distinctively patterned rind) is served thinly sliced like a cold cut.

2 Kabanos These chewy links of air-dried smoked sausage (sometimes called *smoky links* at Bobak's) in sheep casings are boldly scented with caraway and are smoked and aged for varying amounts of time.

3 Kiszka Recipes for this Polish blood sausage vary from place to place: some butchers stuff their *kiszka* with barley (shown), while others use goats or potatoes.

4 Boczek Poles make many varieties of belly and rib bacon, known collectively as *boczek*. Double-smoked varieties—often labeled *boczek myśliwski*, or hunter style—and rib-on versions (*boczek kością*) add extra flavor to slow-cooked dishes.

5 Parówki These finely ground pork sausages—a Polish version of frankfurters—are flavored with hints of paprika and are usually grilled or simmered.

6 Salceson Pork tongue and the meat of the pig's head and feet are the principal components of this headcheese-like, coarse cased sausage, which is bound together with natural gelatin.

7 Kielbasa The garlicky and coarsely ground *kielbasa* that most Americans are familiar with is what Poles know as *wiejska*, or country-style cured sausage. Other varieties include *swojska*, or home style, which is often smoked, not cured, and *weselna* (wedding style), which is generously flecked with black pepper.

8 Karczek wędzony Cut from the upper part of the pork shoulder, this fatty pork butt is cured and smoked and is sold in various shapes and sizes. (See *THE PANTRY*, page 96, for sources for these and other Polish meats.) —D.B.



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Poland's ubiquitous sauerkraut stew, which is served in the restaurant attached to the Bobak's store. "Our food is home style," Stella said, "but if you want to try something upscale, go to Szalas, down the block."

At that Archer Avenue restaurant, named for a traditional mountain chalet, I had a pork cutlet wrapped in bacon along with flatbreads slathered with lard and pork cracklings. I was in hog heaven.

TO WHAT DELICIOUS ends do Chicago's Polish home cooks use these cured and smoked meats? "You should come to our ball and ask them!" said Jan Lorys, director of the city's Polish Museum of

America, located on Milwaukee Avenue, when I called to inquire about the culinary material in his archives. The museum's annual black-tie event, held in a ballroom of the Chase Tower in the Loop, attracted more than 300 people. When I got there, Lorys, a tall, white-haired man, showed me around, introducing me to this person whose mother used to work in the stockyards and that person who was a fabulous cook. At one point, he sent me off to a corner to speak with a kindly wallflower of a historian named Joseph Zurawski, who mapped out a genealogical tree of the city's prominent sausage families. "Slotkowski was the first famous one," he said. That business, he added,

started in 1918 and was bought by Leon's Sausage, which recently became Sausages by Amy, known around the country for its antibiotic-free, all-natural meat. Then there's Mikołajczyk, who sold to a butcher named Andy Kolasa,

I had a pork cutlet wrapped in bacon and bread slathered with lard and pork cracklings. I was in hog heaven

who in turn opened a flashy, new supermarket on the North Side called Andy's Deli.

Zurawski and I also talked about Bobak's, which experienced rapid growth in the late 1990s and expanded by opening glitzy suburban superstores. After Frank Bobak retired, about a decade ago, Stan, who managed the original location, and his brothers, who operated the suburban ones, became involved in a highly publicized family feud. Most of the suburban supermarkets have since closed. "It's been hard on Polonia," a Polish radio announcer, sitting next to me at the dinner table, said about the dispute's effect on Chicago's Polish community, often known collectively as Polonia. "But Bobak's sausage is still very good."

The next day, I set out to find a few of the establishments that people had recommended the night before. When I asked to speak with the butcher at the Krakus deli, far out on Milwaukee Avenue in the Jefferson Park neighborhood, Robert Bielowicz poked his head out of a doorway in back and waved me in. "It's all about how you sort the meat," he said a bit later, explaining that each sausage is a carefully calibrated composition of cuts chosen for taste, texture, and fat. Bielowicz, a third-generation butcher who still works with his

father, a Kraków native, knows exactly how much sausage his regular customers will buy each week: usually about a thousand pounds. His prices are a little higher than those of the large sausage makers I visited, which he attributes to his being picky about his pork and the quality of his raw garlic and other ingredients. There's far less variety in his simply appointed shop, but everything I tasted—the ham coated in garlic and herbs, the air-dried kabanos—had a pure, handcrafted character.

ON THE LAST DAY of my visit, I returned to Bobak's for lunch. The 120-seat cafeteria-style restaurant adjacent to the supermarket was crowded with customers filling their plates at the hot buffet. There were mini aspics studded with herbs and ham, crêpes filled with shredded pork, and bacon-wrapped pork loin. Ah, the joys of lunch at a butcher shop, I thought.

I flagged down Stan. I was eager to tell him about a conversation I'd had the day before. A woman I'd met at the Polish Museum who worked for a Polish food distributor swore that the sausages you find in Chicago are superior in flavor to those you can find in many areas of Poland. Stan replied with typical, understated equanimity. "Here in Chicago," he said, "Poles really cling to their heritage to keep it alive."

As I was leaving, he told me to look for his sausage in Brooklyn, where I live and where he ships a few times a week. Even the air-cured stuff? I asked.

"No," he said. "For that, you'll have to come back to Chicago." —DANA BOWEN

THE GUIDE, page 83, and THE PANTRY, page 96: Information on visiting Chicago's Polish butchers and delis.

RECIPE

Mielone Kotlety (Polish Pork Hamburgers)

SERVES 6

To ensure that this dish (facing page) is seasoned to your liking, cook a small sample of the meat mixture before forming the patties; then taste and adjust the seasonings as necessary. Stan Bobak's wife, Stella, often flavors the meat with Vegeta, a store-bought mix of salt, spices, and vegetables.

- 4 tbsp. butter
- 3 medium yellow onions (2 thinly sliced, 1 finely chopped)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 slices white bread, torn into pieces
- 2 lbs. ground pork
- 1/2 lb. ground veal
- 2 1/2 cups fine dried bread crumbs
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- Sliced rye or brown bread
- Mustard

1. Heat butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add sliced onions and salt and pepper to taste; cook until caramelized, about 25 minutes. Keep warm.

2. Meanwhile, put milk and bread into a bowl; let soak briefly; break up with your fingers. Add remaining onions, pork, veal, 1/2 cup bread crumbs, garlic, eggs, and salt and pepper to taste; mix. Form mixture into 10 patties. Transfer remaining bread crumbs to a dish; coat each patty with bread crumbs.

3. Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add half of the patties and cook, flipping once, until browned, 12–14 minutes total. Transfer to a plate; keep warm. Repeat with remaining oil and patties. Serve burgers on sliced bread, with reserved caramelized onions, and mustard, if you like.



At the Market

Chicago's food shoppers have the world at their feet



Miles of Aisles

CHICAGO'S MYRIAD SUPERMARKETS and specialty food shops are lively expressions of the city's rich human mosaic. For new immigrants and longtime Chicagoans alike, the city has become one of the globe's great culinary crossroads. Witness places like the Super H Mart, above, a 90,000-square-foot megastore in the suburb of Niles that sells everything from Korean ramen noodles to microwave popcorn.

The Long Haul

JUST SOUTH OF WHERE HALSTED STREET passes over Interstate 57, on Chicago's far South Side, you'll find the red cinder-block shed that houses Baylor's Melon Market. Between May and September, owner Homer Baylor and a handful of co-workers—including Leonard Fuller, below—sell blissfully sweet, juicy watermelons trucked in from Baylor's farm in Mississippi. Businesses like Baylor's are part of a skein of kinship and commerce that has long connected Chicago with the rural South.





Off the Hoof

THE MOO & OINK chain of meat emporiums is a living legacy of the now defunct Chicago stockyards, which once supplied pork and beef to countless local and regional purveyors. Today the company's four stores—including the one, on Stony Island Avenue, shown on this page—are well-loved landmarks on the city's South and West sides and its southern suburbs. The markets sell all types of fresh and prepared meats, from prime sirloin steaks and pork tenderloins to rib tips and hand-cleaned chitlins.





Prime Green

NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENT ANDI SKILLMAN, with golden retrievers Kelly and Whisper, takes a break after shopping at the Lincoln Park Farmers Market. Many of the market's 30 or so vendors—who come from farms in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin—have been setting up their tents at the corner of Orchard and Armitage streets on Saturday mornings since the market's inception, almost three decades ago. In 2002, the city of Chicago took over management of the market, which, along with the nearby Green City Market, is one of the most popular in the city. Chicago's outdoor produce bazaars are a component of a campaign on the part of city hall for a healthier, greener, and more sustainable city.



A Chef's Journey

For an acclaimed restaurateur, finding success meant returning to Chicago

I'VE SPENT MOST of my adult life outside of the Midwest, where I was born and raised, but—in one of those unexpected twists at which life excels—my path ultimately led me back to Chicago, where I now work as the chef at a restaurant called North Pond. In the eight years since I've overseen the kitchen and menu there, the restaurant has done well, garnering excellent reviews and being credited in the press as a key player in Chicago's much publicized culinary renaissance. I've seen myself referred to in articles as an inventor, innovator, and artist. While I can't say that this kind of praise doesn't feel good—and while I certainly strive to be those things and more—the native Midwesterner in me always recoils a bit at such accolades. § Growing up in the suburbs

of Chicago, I was inculcated with the traditional mores that people tend to associate with this part of the country: a strong work ethic, an appreciation for family and education, a sense of thrift and pragmatism, and—something that turned out to be important to my cooking—a love for simplicity over superficiality. The food I make at North Pond has been called “seasonal American” and “modern French”, neither of which is off the mark, but really the way I cook is, more than anything else, a direct expression of where I come from. It is also the product of a decades-long journey that began and ended here, in Chicago.

A BEARS FAN and a diligent student, I was more or less typical of the suburban kids I grew up with—except for the fact that I seldom ate pizza and hot dogs and, from an early age, liked to plan my own multi-course birthday dinners, from potato-stuffed veal breast to braised lamb shanks. After high school, my parents gave me the ominous ultimatum faced by so many American young adults: go to college or go to hell. I attended the University of Pennsylvania and spent a year studying at the London School of Economics, making forays across the Channel into France, where I was amazed by the flavors I met with in dishes like rabbit terrine en croûte and duck with a red wine reduction. After graduation, I was afflicted with conventional postcollege directionlessness, accompanied by an overwhelming desire to be anything but conventional. Cooking for a living seemed an apt career choice.

At age 29, after a string of kitchen jobs on the East Coast, I took my first trip outside the developed world, spending five eye-opening, palate-expanding weeks in rural Haiti. To say the experience was unlike anything I'd known



From left, Bruce Sherman in the kitchen of Chicago's North Pond; the restaurant's dining room. Facing page, soft-boiled egg with bacon-infused sweet potatoes and parsley coulis—a popular dish at North Pond.



RECIPE

Soft-Boiled Eggs with Bacon-Infused Sweet Potatoes and Parsley Coulis

SERVES 4

In this dish (shown on previous page), four of Bruce Sherman's favorite ingredients—eggs, sweet potatoes, bacon, and parsley—are paired in an unexpected way. The soft-boiled egg is an elegant counterpoint to the parsley coulis and sweet potatoes; a dainty strip of bacon placed on top of the dish provides visual whimsy and a smoky taste. "There's a certain voluptuousness to the egg yolk that you can't find elsewhere in nature," says Sherman.

- 1½ cups coarse sea salt**
- 4 sweet potatoes (about 2 lbs.)**
- 2 tbsp. chicken stock**
- 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 tsp. white wine vinegar**
- ½ tsp. sugar**
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced**
- Salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
- 8 slices smoked bacon, 2 halved crosswise**
- Leaves from 2 bunches flat-leaf parsley, plus 4 deep-fried leaves**
- 4 eggs**
- 3 tbsp. butter, cut into small pieces**

1. Heat oven to 375°. Cover bottom of roasting pan with coarse salt. Pierce potatoes all over with a fork; roast until soft, about 45 minutes. Peel and mash. Transfer mashed potatoes to a nonstick skillet; cook over medium-low heat until dry, 8–10 minutes. Press through a fine sieve; set aside. Discard solids.

2. Reduce oven heat to 350°. Meanwhile, put stock, oil, vinegar, sugar, onions, and salt and pepper into a pot. Cover with a circle of parchment paper (see page 90 to learn how to make one). Cook over medium-low heat until soft, 25–30 minutes. Purée onions in a blender; press through a fine sieve. Discard solids; set onion mixture aside. Put cream and 6 whole slices bacon into a small pot; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until thickened, about 25 minutes. Strain through a fine sieve. Discard bacon. Cover and set aside.

3. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add fresh parsley leaves; cook for 1 minute. Transfer parsley to a bowl of ice water. Drain, reserving ⅓ cup ice water. Purée parsley and reserved water in a blender. Press through a fine sieve. Discard solids and set aside.

4. Arrange halved bacon on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; top with parchment and rest a second baking sheet on top. Top with a heavy weight, such as a cast-iron skillet. Bake until crisp, 30–35 minutes.

5. Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Add eggs, allow water to return to a boil, then cook until eggs are just soft-boiled, about 4–5 minutes. Transfer eggs to a bowl of ice water and chill. Gently peel eggs under running water and transfer to a medium bowl; cover with water and set aside.

6. To serve, reheat eggs briefly in gently simmering water; drain. Rewarm potatoes and bacon cream together; season with salt and pepper. Warm onion mixture and butter together; stir in parsley purée and season with salt and pepper. Spoon some potatoes into the center of 4 bowls; top each with an egg; pour parsley sauce around sides. Garnish with bacon and fried parsley leaves.

growing up is to put it mildly. What amazed me the most was not the deprivations in the areas I visited but, rather, how little those difficulties seemed to affect the Haitian people's exuberant spiritual and culinary life. The most prosaic meal, of smoky, charcoal-grilled langoustines, fried plantains, and ice-cold bottles of Prestige beer, became for me the very definition of honest, soulful food.

I ended up marrying my traveling companion on that trip, and a year and a half later, when Joan's job as director of a lending program for a nonprofit organization took her to Delhi, India, I went with her. I got a job as a consulting chef at a hotel and taught classes in Western cooking to the kitchen staff. To get to work every morning, I

**The way I cook
is the product of
a decades-long
journey that began
and ended here, in
Chicago**

navigated streets that were alive with colorful goings-on, from women doing laundry in the gutters to street vendors hawking their wares. I did the shopping for my own meals at local markets redolent of freshly ground native spices, which were piled high in tented stalls. I learned over time not only which foods tasted the best at various times of year but also how to make do with only local, in-season foods, since, because of the growing seasons and limited commercial transport, that's all that was available. That principle has guided my cooking ever since. After three and a half years in India, my wife and I, now with a one-year-old daughter, decamped for Paris, where I'd enrolled in a government-run vocational college. There, I studied alongside France's next generation



RECIPE

Beets Two Ways

SERVES 4

In this preparation (left), beets are served both cooked and raw in a pleasing juxtaposition.

- 16 baby chioggia beets, trimmed
- 1 1/4 cups orange juice
- 1 cup vegetable stock
- 1/2 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup honey
- Salt
- 2 tbsp. champagne vinegar
- Freshly ground white pepper
- 1 medium red beet, peeled and julienned
- 1 medium yellow beet, peeled and julienned
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 tbsp. thinly sliced flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 1 tsp. finely chopped chives
- 1/4 cup chopped pistachios

1. Put baby beets, 1 cup orange juice, stock, red wine vinegar, half the honey, and salt to taste into a small pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until tender, 40–45 minutes. Cool, strain, and reserve cooking liquid.

2. In a bowl, whisk together champagne vinegar, 1/2 cup cooking liquid, remaining orange juice and honey, and salt and pepper to taste in a bowl. Peel and thinly slice baby beets; add to bowl. Let marinate for 2 hours.

3. Soak julienned beets in separate bowls of ice water for 1 hour.

4. Meanwhile, simmer remaining cooking liquid in a small pot over medium heat to make a glaze, about 5 minutes. Set glaze aside.

5. To serve, divide baby beets between 4 plates, using a slotted spoon. Whisk together oil, parsley, chives, 2 tbsp. beet marinade, and salt and pepper to taste in a bowl. Drain julienned beets; pat dry; toss with dressing. Put dressed beets beside baby beets and drizzle with glaze; sprinkle with pistachios.



RECIPE

Spice-Braised Lamb Shanks with Lentils

SERVES 4

In this dish (facing page), Sherman marinates and braises lamb shanks in a spice-based marinade. He leaves the spices whole in order to extract their flavor slowly during the long cooking process. The shanks are served atop a bed of small French green lentils (called lentilles vertes du Puy), which are simmered with aromatics, including an onion studded with cloves—a traditional French flavoring for legumes.

2 cups white wine, preferably gewürztraminer	4 1-lb. lamb shanks, trimmed and frenched
1 1/4 cups extra-virgin olive oil	3 tbsp. canola oil
1/3 cup coriander seeds	Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
3 tbsp. fennel seeds	6 cups chicken stock
2 tsp. black peppercorns	1 1/2 cups French green lentils (lentilles vertes du Puy)
1 tsp. red pepper flakes	4 whole cloves
10 cloves garlic (8 whole, 2 halved)	4 slices smoked bacon, quartered
4 cinnamon sticks, halved	1 delicata or acorn squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1/4" cubes
4 green cardamom pods	2 bosc pears, peeled, cored, and cut into 1/4" cubes
6 carrots, peeled (4 thinly sliced, 2 cut into 1"-thick rounds)	3 plum tomatoes, peeled, cored, and cut into 1/4" cubes
3 ribs celery (2 thinly sliced crosswise, 1 quartered)	1 tbsp. thinly sliced flat-leaf parsley leaves
3 medium yellow onions (2 thinly sliced, 1 halved)	
1 3" piece ginger, peeled and thinly sliced	
1 orange, thinly sliced, ends discarded	

1. Combine wine, 1 cup olive oil, coriander, fennel, peppercorns, pepper flakes, whole garlic, cinnamon, cardamom, sliced carrots, sliced celery, sliced onions, ginger, and oranges in a bowl. Add lamb; toss to coat. Divide between 2 large sealable plastic bags and let marinate in the refrigerator for 36–48 hours.

2. Heat oven to 300°. Remove lamb from marinade. Scrape off any marinade that clings to lamb; reserve marinade. Heat canola oil in a wide pot over medium-high heat. Season lamb all over with salt and pepper. Brown the lamb, turning occasionally, 12–14 minutes. Transfer lamb to a plate. Add reserved marinade; cook, scraping up browned bits, 2–3 minutes. Add lamb and stock; boil. Cover pot with foil; braise in oven until tender, about 2 1/2 hours. Remove from oven; let cool for 20 minutes. Transfer lamb to a bowl; set aside. Strain broth, discarding solids; skim off and discard fat. Reserve lamb and broth.

3. Put lentils and 2 cups water into a pot. Bring to a boil; drain and rinse lentils and return to pot. Press cloves into onion halves; add to pot with remaining garlic, carrots, celery, and bacon. Cover with water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until tender, 25–30 minutes. Discard all aromatics and return lentils to pot with squash and 2 1/2 cups lamb broth; cook over medium heat until squash is tender, 4–5 minutes. Add pears; cook for 1 minute. Add tomatoes, parsley, and chives; cook until tomatoes are softened, about 1 minute more. Season the lentil mixture with salt and pepper. (Reduce any remaining lamb broth slightly over medium heat.) Divide lentils between 4 large bowls and top with lamb shanks. Drizzle with reduced broth and remaining olive oil.

of butchers, fishmongers, and pastry chefs, who were learning their respective artisanal crafts, refined and perfected over centuries. Between classes, I crammed in stints at upscale restaurants, browsed the city's legendary markets, and juggled the demands of marriage and parenthood within the confines of a garret apartment. It was an intense, exhilarating year, during which my cooking skills underwent a dramatic and profound transformation; by the end of it, I was invigorated but exhausted and was beginning to feel the pull of more-familiar surroundings.

IT WAS 1997, and in the 18 years since I'd left for college, Chicago had changed. I'd been reading about the city's vibrant food scene for a while, and although other, more-exotic destinations still had an allure, I found myself drawn back to where I'd grown up. Chicago's emerging gastronomic reputation was an attraction, to be sure, but there was also something less tangible: the values I'd always attributed to the Chicagoans I'd known—namely, a respect for family (I now had one) and for community, which I had sorely missed when we were living abroad.

I also had my career in mind: after years of cooking in other people's kitchens, I longed to run one of my own, and Chicago seemed fertile ground. The chance presented itself in the most banal way. Two years after returning to the city, I answered a classified ad in the *Chicago Tribune* for the position of executive chef at a restaurant, which the ad didn't name. The place turned out to be an 18-month-old establishment in an 87-year-old building that once served as a warming shelter for ice skaters beside a small body of water known as the North Pond, which sits in the shadow of luxury high-rises in Lincoln Park, just north of the Loop.

I was offered the job and took

it, but I had no idea what I was getting into. The kitchen I'd inherited was more Fawlty Towers than Eiffel Tower. When, on my second night, I found several of my (now former) cooks sharing a bottle of tequila in the bathroom just before service, I knew I faced some hardship. I told the owner that I'd stay on only if he gave me the freedom to run the kitchen the way I wanted—and to reinvent the menu and make it my own.

AS I STARTED creating dishes for North Pond, I quickly realized how deeply influenced they were by my former teachers, from Parisian sauciers to Haitian housemaids. The menu became a compilation of dishes made by many different methods, to keep the food interesting for both diners and cooks. I paired complicated techniques

After years of cooking in other people's kitchens, I longed to run my own. Chicago was fertile ground

with basic ones to highlight the artfulness of each. One of the first appetizers on that menu was a dish that ultimately evolved into its current incarnation: a warm, soft-boiled egg served atop creamy, bacon-flavored sweet potatoes surrounded by bright green parsley sauce with a smoky stick of bacon alongside. The egg is, as has often been said, a simple form of perfection; I wanted this pairing to do that perfection justice and, at the same time, not take itself too seriously. This was Chicago, after all.

Another addition to the menu was a favorite dish from my teenage years, braised lamb shank. I now marinate it with a palette of spices that I learned how to use in India: coriander, cinnamon, (continued on page 68)





RECIPE

Apple-Lavender Tarte Tatin

MAKES ONE 9" TART

The secret to making this tart (shown on page 66) is to cook the apples patiently over low heat, letting them caramelize slowly; if you try to speed up the process you'll run the risk of burning them.

- 12 **tblsp. butter**
- 1/2 **cup dried, edible lavender buds (see page 96), plus sprigs for garnish**
- 8 **firm apples such as golden delicious or northern spy, peeled, halved, and cored**
- 1/2 **cup sugar**
- 1 **10" circle frozen puff pastry, thawed and chilled**

1. Melt butter in a small pot over medium-high heat. Remove pot from heat, add lavender, cover, and set aside to let infuse for 30 minutes. Warm butter again and strain through a fine sieve, pressing lavender with the back of a spoon to extract as much as possible; discard solids. Set lavender butter aside.

2. Arrange 14 of the apple halves vertically around the sides of a 9" cast-iron skillet, all facing in the same direction, nesting them as tightly as possible. Arrange remaining apples halves in center of skillet, rounded side down. Brush apples evenly with reserved lavender butter; sprinkle all over with sugar. Cook over medium-low heat, without stirring, until apples are deep brown on the bottom and softened about halfway up, about 1 1/2 hours. Let cool for 30 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, heat oven to 425°. Prick puff pastry all over with a fork and arrange on top of apples, punctured side down; tuck edges in around apples. Bake until golden brown all over, about 15 minutes. Let rest for 5 minutes, then run a knife around the edge. Place a large plate over the skillet; invert tart onto the plate. Garnish with lavender sprigs and serve with vanilla ice cream, if you like.

(continued from page 65) cardamom, ginger, and cloves. I serve the lamb atop an earthy stew of small French lentils, brightened and sweetened with diced pear, squash, and tomato—an assemblage I learned to prepare while studying in France. If there was ever a dish that was truly a representation of my journey as a cook thus far, it's this one.

THROUGHOUT THESE years of running a kitchen—a job as stressful as it is invigorating—my mantra has always been “big picture, big picture, big picture”. That means stepping back, inhaling deeply, and remembering what I learned during my travels to places where eating was more an act of sustenance than one of gastronomic discovery. I now try to pass along

While our jobs require us to focus on subtleties of flavor and execution, we cannot lose sight of life's larger issues

that perspective to my fellow cooks, reminding them that while our jobs require us to focus with extraordinary intensity on subtleties of flavor and execution, we must not lose sight of life's larger issues.

These days, I stay involved in my community by developing relationships with farmers, teaching in my daughters' schools, and helping to manage the local farmers' market. I also think of the artisans I studied with in Paris, remembering to look at my work in the larger context of craft and tradition. Indeed, returning to Chicago has allowed me to rediscover the simple—though not simplistic—integrity of well-crafted food that is the authentic expression of a season and a place. —BRUCE SHERMAN, a 2007 James Beard Foundation Best Chef nominee

RECIPE

Bread-Crusted Halibut with Leek Ragoût and Red Pepper Purée

SERVES 4

In this novel preparation (shown on previous page), Sherman creates a crisp and buttery crust for halibut filets using sliced white bread. (See page 92 for a closer look at the process.)

- 2 **large red bell peppers**
- 12 **tblsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- Salt and freshly ground white pepper**
- 2 **tsp. honey**
- 1 **tsp. sherry vinegar**
- Dash of Tabasco**
- 4 **large leeks, white and light green parts only, trimmed and thinly sliced crosswise**
- 1 **cup plus 2 tblsp. chicken stock**
- 4 **6-oz. boneless skinless halibut filets**
- 1 **egg white, lightly beaten**
- 4 **1/4"-thick slices dense white bread**
- 1 **tblsp. butter**
- 1 **tblsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves**
- 1 **cup mesclun greens**
- 4 **tsp. aged balsamic vinegar**

1. Heat oven to 425°. Toss the peppers with 1 tbsp. oil and salt and pepper to taste. Roast on baking sheet, turning once, until soft and blackened, about 25 minutes. Transfer to a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and set aside to let steam for 15 minutes. Discard the skin, seeds, and cores from the peppers. Roughly chop the peppers and combine them with 1 tsp. oil, honey, vinegar, Tabasco, and salt and pepper to taste in a blender and purée. Strain the purée through a fine sieve into a bowl; cover to keep warm.

2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the leeks and cook until soft, 30–45 seconds. Drain the leeks in a colander in the sink, transfer them to a bowl of ice water, and let chill. Drain the leeks again and pat them dry with paper towels. Heat 4 tbsp. oil in a nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Add the leeks, 2 tbsp. stock, and salt and pepper to taste. Cook until the stock has evaporated; add 2 tbsp. more. Repeat process until 1 cup of chicken stock total has been absorbed, about 30 minutes total. Cover and keep the leeks warm.

3. Season the fish filets with salt and pepper to taste. Brush the flesh side of the filets with egg whites. Place the filets, egg white-coated sides down, in the center of the bread slices and press gently to adhere. Trim the excess bread from sides (see page 92). Heat 3 tbsp. oil and the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook the filets, bread-crusted side down, flipping once, until golden brown and cooked through, 6–8 minutes.

4. To serve, stir 1 tbsp. of the oil and the remaining 2 tbsp. stock into the pepper purée and season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir the parsley into the leeks and pile them neatly onto the centers of 4 plates. Place the halibut filets on top of the leeks. Spoon the pepper purée onto the plates, forming 3"-wide dots. Arrange the greens next to the filets, overlapping them slightly on top. Drizzle the plates artfully with the remaining oil and balsamic vinegar.

South Side Soul

Chicago's soul food restaurants, infused with history, remain close to their Southern roots

HELEN MAYBELLE Anglin, the 77-year-old proprietor of the Soul Queen restaurant on Stony Island Avenue at 91st Street, on Chicago's South Side, sits in a high-backed vinyl booth, leafing through an album of

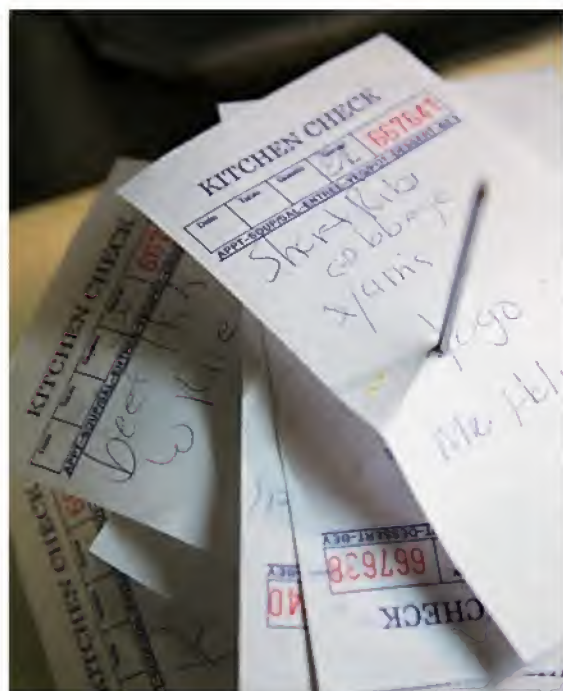
photographs that have faded with age. Pausing to greet regulars, she turns the pages slowly. The pictures before her are an almanac of the changes that she and her neighborhood have gone through since she left Alabama at the age of 17 in search of a home where, as she says, she could just be herself, "without bending down to anybody".

One early picture, from the 1940s, shows the interior of her first restaurant, called the H&H Café; its white Formica countertops and chrome stools gleam. A neon sign in the window reads "Catfish—Louisiana Fried Pies". Another photograph depicts Anglin—laughing in her crisp waitress's uniform—standing amid the restaurant's tables, which are filled with African-American patrons dressed to the nines.

As Anglin pages through the album, the outfits and the decor change. Pillbox hats give way to afros. The café's post-



Cook Shirley Loyd with a platter of fried chicken at Izola's, a 51-year-old South Side institution.



Scenes from Izola's, clockwise from top left: handwritten checks; framed photos of owner Izola White's family and friends; cooks Mike White and Shirley Loyd in the kitchen. Facing page, a street mural on the South Side.

war brightness transforms into a brown-and-gold glamour. Famous faces begin to appear: Joe Louis, Martin Luther King Jr., Sidney Poitier, Muhammad Ali, Jesse Jackson, Nelson Mandela. The laughing girl in the waitress's dress has grown into a

woman. Anglin and her restaurant have become Chicago institutions.

Indeed, for a generation of black Chicagoans—especially those who arrived in the city during the Great Migration, the exodus of Southern blacks to

the urban centers of the North between the world wars—establishments like Anglin's were just that. More than merely places to eat, these convivial restaurants were both community centers and cultural conduits. They connected urban newcomers

to the Southern world many of them had left behind—a world where family and community came first. More than that, these places became drivers of prosperity in black neighborhoods and, as such, powerful symbols of civic strength to which politicians and celebrities frequently paid homage.

As a historian interested in the intersection of food and migration in Chicago's black communities, I've spent a lot of time in many of the city's soul food establishments, both as

RECIPE

Izola's Fried Chicken

SERVES 4-6

Izola White's recipe for this classic Southern dish (shown on previous page) is straightforward and produces crispy, succulent results.

- 2 cups milk
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups flour
- 1 tbsp. garlic powder
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Canola oil
- 2 3½-lb. chickens, cut into 16 pieces

1. Whisk together milk and eggs in a wide deep dish; set aside. Whisk together flour, garlic powder, and salt and freshly ground pepper to taste in a second dish; set aside. Pour oil into a large cast-iron skillet to a depth of 1"; heat over medium to medium-high heat until oil registers 350° on a deep-fry thermometer.

2. Working in batches, season chicken with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste; coat in milk-egg mixture. Coat chicken well in flour mixture, shake off any excess, and fry, turning once, until deep golden brown and cooked through, about 10-15 minutes per batch. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate. Serve at once.



part of my research and because I, too, wanted to connect to an earlier time and place: namely, the childhood days I spent eating and learning to cook Southern food in my grandmother's kitchen. I've found that Chicago's black-owned restaurants—Soul Queen and also places like Army & Lou's, Izola's, and Helen's, most of which flourish on the city's South Side—have managed to preserve not only Southern foodways but also a century's worth of history.

THESE DAYS, IT'S easy to pass by Soul Queen without much thought. The city—especially the downtown Loop—is crowded with newfangled facsimiles of Southern-style restaurants, complete with old license plates hanging on the walls and bottles of hot sauce on red-and-white-checked tablecloths. But the abundance of these establishments makes it easy to forget that soul food as a culinary genre is a relatively recent invention.

The roots of this urban cuisine had already taken hold decades before in South Side neighborhoods like Bronzeville, long a center of Chicago's black community, and in other parts of the city. As early as the 1920s, the *Chicago Defender*, the city's principal African-American newspaper (still in existence),

Many of Chicago's black-owned restaurants are both community centers and cultural conduits

was running advertisements and articles describing lunch counters, chicken shacks, barbecue wagons, and "pig ankle joints" that catered to migrants' desire for such familiar foods as fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, corn bread, mustard greens in "pot likker", and caramel-frosted white cake. The Southern blacks pouring

into the city during the Great Migration frequently sought out places owned by people from their hometowns, places where they could meet up with old friends while savoring a delicious meal.

Restaurants in black neighborhoods proliferated and thrived during the middle decades of the century, as a growing number of African-Americans, both men and women, began to realize that restaurant ownership was a stable and potentially lucrative occupation. For one thing, having grown up on or around farms, these new entrepreneurs had plenty of firsthand experience in producing and, usually, preparing food. What's more, restaurants—unlike drugstores and beauty parlors, two other historically popular non-industrial sources of livelihood among urban blacks—could be opened without a great deal of capital. The restaurant business also presented an attractive alternative to factory work—a Chicago



Above, two customers eating at the counter at Izola's; the owner, Izola White, can often be found sitting at one of the tables behind them. Facing page, the corn cakes at Helen's, another venerated South Side establishment.

RECIPE

Helen's Corn Cakes

MAKES ABOUT 20

This recipe is based on one given to us by Helen Nixon, an Arkansas native and the owner of Helen's Restaurant, on Chicago's South Side. Nixon learned how to cook these cakes from her mother, who, when it was too hot to turn on the oven, would make her corn bread batter as she did flapjacks, using a cast-iron skillet. Slather the cakes generously with butter while they're still warm.

- 1½ cups flour
- 1½ cups coarse yellow cornmeal
- 3 tbsp. baking powder
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- ½ cup canola oil
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 8 tbsp. butter, plus more for spreading

1. Put the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, sugar, and salt into a large bowl and whisk to combine. Set the flour mixture aside. Put the buttermilk, oil, eggs, and ½ cup warm water into a second large bowl and whisk together. Add the buttermilk mixture to the flour mixture and stir just until combined. (Overmixing can produce tough corn cakes.)

2. Working in small batches, melt 2 tbsp. of the butter in a large seasoned cast-iron skillet or on a large griddle over medium-high heat. Pour about ¼ cup batter onto the griddle to form two or three 3"-wide circles, keeping them spaced about 2" apart. Cook, flipping once, until golden brown on both sides and cooked through, about 5 minutes total. Transfer the finished cakes to a plate and cover them with a kitchen towel to keep them warm. Serve warm, with plenty of butter.



mainstay—which tended to be unreliable for blacks, who were often the last hired and first fired. Finally, owning a restaurant was an excellent way to gain prominence in a community, as photos in black business directories and church bulletins of the prewar years attest.

It wasn't until after World War II, however, that blacks in Chicago began to establish a connection between food and their own, larger political and social aspirations. In the late 1950s, as the civil rights movement began to spread from the rural South to the urban North, the well-established black business leaders who had arrived during the early waves of the Great Migration became crucial

METHOD

Macaroni and Cheese

This version of macaroni and cheese (shown on facing page), from the South Side restaurant Helen's, is made richer by the addition of evaporated milk. Heat oven to 400°. Grease a rectangular 4-quart casserole dish with 1 tbsp. butter and set aside. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add 1½ lbs. dried elbow macaroni and cook until soft, 8–10 minutes. Drain and rinse macaroni under cold water. Transfer rinsed macaroni to a large bowl. Add 5½ lightly packed cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese, 2 cups canned evaporated milk, 2 sticks (16 tbsp.) melted butter, 2 tbsp. sugar, and salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste. Stir the macaroni mixture well; transfer the mixture to the prepared casserole dish and spread out evenly with a spatula. Top with 1½ lightly packed cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese; bake until hot throughout and light golden brown on top, about 20 minutes. Set aside to let rest for 10 minutes, then serve. Makes 6–8 servings.



Clockwise from top left: beans and rice at Izola's; finishing off a roasted turkey leg, a specialty at Helen's; Lem's, one of Chicago's most revered barbecue joints; a solitary lunch at Helen's. Facing page, macaroni and cheese.

advocates for the empowerment of their communities, helping to foster thriving industries in music, literature, journalism, and food.

Soul as a cultural signifier began to gain currency in everyday parlance around this time, first in the realm of music and

then, soon afterward, in food. Though the term *soul food* had likely been around for years—Anglin remembers her mother using it—the phrase attained cultural cachet in the 1960s. As civil rights leaders and members of the emerging Black Power movement promoted greater so-

cial and cultural self-awareness among urban blacks, the word *soul* came to be used by entrepreneurs to confer an air of authenticity on their establishments and the products they sold. And, throughout the 1960s, as black identity became a more seriously researched subject, people began

RECIPE

Mustard Greens with Salt Pork and Spicy Vinegar

SERVES 6-8

Mustard greens are a Southern staple. At Izola's, they're simmered for a long time with salt pork and sugar—a simple method that yields sumptuous flavor. (The dish is shown on the facing page.) Dousing the cooked greens with chile-infused vinegar sharpens their flavor. Restaurateur Izola White sometimes adds a dash of coffee to the vinegar to deepen its color and taste.

- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- 2 tbsp. red pepper flakes
- 1½ lbs. salt pork, halved (see page 91 for more information)
- 4 tbsp. butter or margarine
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- Salt
- 4 lbs. mustard greens (about 5 bunches), trimmed, thick veins removed, and roughly chopped

1. Put vinegar and pepper flakes into a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Screw top on jar and shake well. Let the spicy vinegar sit at room temperature overnight to allow the flavors to meld.

2. Put salt pork, butter, sugar, salt to taste, and 6 cups water into a large pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes. Add mustard greens and stir well. Cook, covered, until completely wilted, tender, and dark green, about 2 hours. Season with salt to taste.

3. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the salt pork to a cutting board. When cool enough to handle, cut lengthwise into thin slices. Divide the greens (with some of their juices, otherwise known as “pot likker”) between plates and arrange slices of the salt pork around them. Drizzle the greens with a little of the spicy vinegar.

exploring the African roots of this familiar cuisine.

By the early 1970s, there had been an explosion of new soul food restaurants in Chicago and other Northern cities. For their part, established restaurateurs like Anglin recognized soul food as an excellent marketing concept that united home-style cooking with their own self-image as upholders of the African-American commitment to self-help and hard work. These entrepreneurs, already known in their own communities, gained citywide visibility for their roles as steadfast employers, as philanthropists, and as sources of economic stability within their neighborhoods.

AS FOR THE FOOD itself, it has, for the most part, remained deeply rooted in traditional Southern cookery, despite the fact that some Southern blacks dismiss urban soul food as “restaurant cooking,” which they consider inferior to homemade. In truth, the cooking of Chicago's soul food restaurants differs little from what one might find in a Southern home kitchen. Hecky Powell, the 56-year-old owner of Hecky's, a barbecue joint, told me recently that he believes soul food is really just Southern food under a Black Power nickname.

Still, some distinctions have developed. For one thing, restaurants located in the inner city have traditionally had poor access to fresh produce and often relied on canned ingredients, which eventually became an accepted part of many classic soul food recipes. (I was once admonished by a newspaper editor for including canned peaches in a recipe for peach cobbler I submitted as part of an article on Chicago soul food; she claimed she wanted something more “authentic.”) Also, proximity to other ethnic groups inevitably influenced many African-American cooks.

Though he learned to cook from his mother, a native Louisianan who migrated north in 1944, and still uses her recipes, Powell, for instance, cut his teeth working in a diner owned by Greek immigrants. “That was my first job in a restaurant,” he said. “I was 14 years old. I peeled potatoes, carrots. I learned to make soup.” He attributes much of his work ethic to his old bosses there. Today, the menus at many soul food restaurants reflect this cross-cultural contact. At some South Side restaurants, gyros and reuben sandwiches can be found alongside pulled pork and collard greens.

The cooking of soul food restaurants differs little from what one might find in a Southern home kitchen

More important than the question of soul food's origins, as far as Powell is concerned, is that young people are no longer learning to prepare Southern food in their mothers' kitchens, as he did. Powell told me that most of his customers don't even know how to fry a chicken anymore. (On hearing this, I suddenly recalled my uncle telling me, years ago, that I would never land a decent husband if I didn't learn how to kill and pluck a bird.) Indeed, the more exotic Southern delicacies, like chitlins and souse and chicken feet, are rarely served in Chicago restaurants these days, except on special occasions.

For folks like Powell, the essence of a good soul food restaurant is a genuine, deep love for the food. “If you have a passion for cooking, it makes the food taste better,” Powell said. “To me, it's a spiritual kind of deal, really.”

THE COMMUNITY-ORIENTED attitude exemplified by entrepreneurs like Powell, who runs his own youth foundation, and the idea that soul food is as much a value system as a collection of dishes and recipes have helped make soul food restaurants preferred destinations for Chicago's politicians and power brokers. On any given afternoon at a place like Army & Lou's, a famous South Side restaurant that has been in operation since 1945, you can find judges, aldermen, and police brass holding heated discussions over coffee and iced tea. “The day I took over, in 1992,” recalls Dolores Reynolds, the owner of Army & Lou's, “a group of policemen just walked in and sat down at that table over there. I was a new owner; I didn't know what was going on. One of my waitresses said, ‘Aw, didn't you know? That's table four—that's their table.’”

Many long-established restaurant proprietors in Chicago's black neighborhoods can tell tales of witnessing Martin Luther King's after-hours strategy meetings over glasses of sweet tea, or former mayor Harold Washington's backroom politicking, or the late-night cravings for sweet potato pie of the Reverend Jesse Jackson, the longtime Chicago political activist. Edna's, a legendary West Side restaurant, was a favorite of Dr. King's when he stayed in the city during his 1965 anti-poverty campaign. “I was a little bit too young to remember it,” says Melvin Mitchell, the grandson of the original owner, “but I know that Dr. King used to sleep at one of the churches nearby when he was in town. They didn't have anything to eat, so they came here.” Edna's was one of the only buildings left untouched in its neighborhood during the riots that rocked Chicago following Dr.



RECIPE

**Rose's Famous
Caramel Cake**

MAKES ONE 9" CAKE

Rose Deshazer-White, a longtime South Side resident, has earned local fame for this dessert.

- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 3¼ cups cake flour
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 6¼ cups sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 4 eggs
- 1¼ cups milk
- 16 tbsp. salted butter
- 2 12-oz. cans evaporated milk

1. Heat oven to 350°. Making sure all ingredients are at room temperature, grease two 9" round cake pans with 1 tbsp. unsalted butter; dust with 1½ tsp. flour, tap out excess, and set aside. Sift flour, baking powder, and salt together; set aside. Beat remaining unsalted butter and 2½ cups sugar in a bowl with an electric mixer until fluffy. Add vanilla and eggs one at a time, beating after each addition. Add flour mixture and milk alternately in 3 batches, beating smooth after each addition. Divide batter between pans. Bake until golden, 30–35 minutes. Let cool on a rack for 10 minutes; remove cakes; let cool completely. Slice tops off cakes to level them.

2. To make icing, cook remaining sugar and salted butter in a pot over high heat, stirring constantly, until light brown, 7–8 minutes. Carefully stir in evaporated milk; reduce heat to medium-low; cook, stirring constantly, until smooth, 8–10 minutes. Cook, stirring occasionally, until icing registers 240° on a candy thermometer, about 1½ hours. Remove from heat; beat with a wooden spoon until thick, glossy, and spreadable, 20–25 minutes. (A dollop dropped on a plate should ooze only slightly.) Ice bottom layer of cake; top with second layer and ice the outside. Chill cake until set.

King's assassination, in 1968.

Today, meeting and being photographed with black voters over a spread of Southern food at the city's soul food restaurants has become an election-year ritual for governors, mayors, and all manner of candidates for local office. And it's

no surprise, for any shrewd politician knows that soul food places are unique reflections of black Chicagoans' individual and group pride. These restaurants have managed to preserve timeworn traditions amid often challenging inner-city circumstances. They stand as examples of

how the generation of the Great Migration refused to "bend down". —TRACY POE, a former professor of history at DePaul University

THE GUIDE, page 83: Information on visiting some of Chicago's best soul food restaurants.



Clockwise from top left: Rose Deshazer-White's famous caramel cake; a portrait in the window at Izola's, one of many decorating the restaurant; fresh watermelon; the restaurant's street-front entrance, on East 79th Street.

A Place at the Table

For this Chicago native, home is where the food is

IT WAS THE LATE 1980s, and you'd have known it by looking at me and my friends, with our big shoulder pads and even bigger hair. We were typical high-school girls from suburban Chicago. I was the new kid, having recently moved from the city's North Side to the tree-lined residential streets of Arlington Heights, a northwestern suburb. And, though I would never admit it to anyone, I wanted nothing more than to fit in. My friends lived in utopian subdivisions with manicured

lawns and had families who attended football games together, went on vacation together, and—most significant to me—ate meals together. I, on the other hand, lived in an apartment complex in a far corner of town with an emotionally unstable, weight-obsessed mom who rarely cooked and hardly seemed to notice whether I was home or not.

So, I slipped into my friends' lives, telling them little about my own world and drawing sustenance from theirs. No one saw more of me during those years than my classmate Stacey Campo, whose mother and stepfather always seemed happy to have me around. On most days, when Stacey and I got home from school, Mr. Campo was in front of the TV, snacking on salty lupini beans straight out of the jar. "It's an Italian thing," Stacey would explain. Raised on Taylor Street in Chicago's Little Italy, Michael Campo was a broad-shouldered man with a bearish charm whose career arc had taken him from bar-

tender to hairdresser to pastor at a nearby church. "What the hell, Kel. Stay for dinner," he'd say, calling me by my nickname. Mrs. Campo—a tall, blond, and frequently bejeweled half Sicilian-half German who had grown up on the city's West Side—would second her husband's invitation. Eventually,

"Gravy" was a silky, slow-simmered meat-and-tomato sauce, a Campo family specialty

they stopped asking. It was just understood that I'd stay.

The Campos' brown-on-beige split-level was always busy, with friends and neighbors dropping by and, like me, often sticking around for dinner. The food Stacey's parents cooked—a freewheeling menu of Italian and Italian-American dishes—was like nothing I'd ever

encountered. What they called gravy—something I thought you served on Thanksgiving and came in a boat—was a silky, slow-simmered meat-and-tomato sauce that was a Campo family specialty; it coated every groove of the rigatoni they served and blanketed their homemade cheese ravioli. Sometimes, before dinner, I'd hover around the kitchen's perimeter while Mr. Campo churned san marzano tomatoes through a food mill and then tended the sauce pot, looking for the sheen that told him the gravy was ready.

Night after night, we'd pass platters of beautifully prepared rustic dishes: pan-seared pork chops, cauliflower fritters, or broccoli florets sautéed in garlic and doused with lemon juice. Certain dishes would prompt nostalgia in Mr. Campo, who would tell stories about the old neighborhood, particularly the characters who used to hang around the taproom, on Taylor Street and Garibaldi Place, that his father owned and where young Campo started working at the bar at age 14. He liked to point out that his wife, Sandra, née Waller, came from what he considered a more "high-class" Italian enclave. After they were married, he told me, she learned how to make his favorite foods by standing at her new mother-in-law's side, watching as Minnie Campo fried meatballs, prepared scarola, a

RECIPE

Cavatielli (Ricotta Dumplings)

SERVES 6-8

Cavatielli are soft, gnocchi-like dumplings. Members of the Campo family—true to their southern Italian dialect—pronounce *cavatielli* as "gavadill". You can freeze the raw cavatielli in a single layer on a sheet tray and, once they're frozen, transfer them to a freezer bag to store for up to three months.

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour, preferably King Arthur

1 1/2 lbs. ricotta cheese (about 2 1/2 cups)

**2 eggs
Salt**

1/2 cup finely grated pecorino romano cheese

1. Mix flour, ricotta, and eggs in a large bowl to make a semismooth dough. Cover with plastic wrap; set aside to let rest for 1 hour.

2. Turn dough out onto a floured surface; divide into 6 equal pieces. Using your hands, roll each piece of dough into a 20"-long rope. Cut each rope crosswise into 1/2"-thick pieces. To form the dumplings, roll the curved back of a fork over each piece, pressing down and rolling the tines (and dough) toward you. The goal is to leave tine marks on the outside of each dough piece while rolling the piece onto itself, creating a dent in the center. (Place each piece on the fine-holed side of a box grater to make the rolling easier.) Transfer dumplings to a floured sheet tray; sprinkle with more flour. Set dough aside, uncovered, to let dry for 1 hour.

3. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add dumplings in batches; gently stir; cook just until they rise to top, 2-3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer dumplings to a bowl. Serve tossed with hearty tomato ragù (see page 80), if you like, and sprinkled with cheese.

RECIPE

Sunday Gravy

(Hearty Tomato Ragù)

SERVES 6

The Campo family has made this “gravy”, a meaty tomato sauce, for generations. Mr. Campo learned the recipe from his mother, Dominica “Minnie” Campo, who he suspects intentionally left out an ingredient. His never tasted as sublime as hers until he figured out the secret: lamb chops. The Campos enrich the gravy with a variety of meats: links of hot Italian sausage, slender baby back ribs, hearty pork neck bones, and thin-cut lamb shoulder chops. Before adding it to the sauce, be sure to roast all the meat until it’s completely caramelized; the sauce will taste richer. If you’d like to cook meatballs with the gravy, add them at least 20 minutes but no longer than two hours in advance of serving.

- 1 lb. pork baby back ribs, cut into individual ribs
- 1 lb. pork neck bones (see page 91 for more information)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. hot Italian sausage links, cut into 2”–3” pieces
- 2 thin-cut lamb shoulder chops (about 1 lb.)
- 2 28-oz. cans whole peeled tomatoes, preferably san marzano, with their liquid
- 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, left whole
- 2 6-oz. cans tomato paste
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white wine
- 1 tbsp. roughly chopped basil leaves
- 1 tbsp. roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. red pepper flakes
- 1 cup finely grated pecorino romano cheese

1. Heat oven to 400°. Line a large baking sheet with aluminum foil and arrange ribs, neck bones, sausage, and lamb chops in a single layer on top. Roast meat, turning with tongs occasionally, until deep golden brown and cooked through, about 40 minutes for the sausage and 1 hour for the ribs, bones, and lamb. Set roasted meat aside.

2. Meanwhile, run the tomatoes and their juice through a food mill twice; discard any remaining seeds or skin. Set puréed tomatoes aside.

3. Heat oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Add tomato paste and fry, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Add 3 cups water and salt and pepper to taste and stir well. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes. Add wine, basil, parsley, oregano, and reserved tomato purée. Stir well and cook for 10 minutes more. Partially cover pot and cook until slightly thickened, about 30 minutes.

4. Transfer the roasted meat to the pot with the tomato sauce. Add red pepper flakes and salt and pepper to taste and simmer, partially covered, until thickened, about 30 minutes more. (The sauce will appear glossy.) Stir in $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the cheese and cook briefly, partially covered, until flavors have melded.

5. Transfer sauce to a large bowl and top with some of the cheese. (Leave the meat in the sauce, or serve it on the side.) Toss some of the sauce with ricotta dumplings (see page 79), or cooked pasta, such as rigatoni, and sprinkle with remaining cheese.

garlicky braise of escarole, cannellini beans, and sausages, or laid out freshly made ricotta dumplings—which she called cavatielli—atop her queen-size bed to dry.

I sometimes felt pangs of guilt about how happy I was to be part of the Campos’ dinners. By the end of every meal, Stacey was always itching to leave the table, eager to get on with typical teenage business, but I could have stayed there forever. Finally, after the last dish was cleared, I’d reluctantly say good-bye and pedal home on my red ten-speed through the quiet suburban night.

Stacey and I went in different directions after high school. Strangely, for someone who had never enjoyed being at home, I remained in the Chicago area to go to college. When Stacey was back on break from Indiana University, I’d rush back to the Campos’ house for dinner. Three years later, when I was considering going to cooking school, the whole family cheered me on between mouthfuls. And when I finally enrolled in a culinary program in Colorado, the Campos sent me off with a lavish dinner. I remember Mrs. Campo’s hugging me tightly before I climbed into my car and pointed it west.

In the years since, I have made food my career: I’ve worked in restaurants and bakeries and written cookbooks. Having long ago shed my teenage angst (and my big hair), I’ve tried to use my love of food to reconnect with my mom, to try to get her to understand what I found so fulfilling about sitting at that table at the Campos’ house. It may take two years or 20, but I hope one day to show her how much love can be expressed in a perfectly fried cauliflower fritter. —**RAQUEL PELZEL**, *coauthor of American Masala* (Clarkson Potter, 2007)

Right, clockwise from top: hearty tomato ragù; escarole, sausage, and cannellini bean stew; cauliflower fritters; ricotta dumplings.



RECIPE

Scarola

(Escarole, Sausage, and Cannellini Bean Stew)

SERVES 6-8

In this stew, escarole ("shcadall", as the Campos call it) is simmered with pieces of pecorino romano cheese, whose taste provides a nutty counterpoint to the spicy sausage and creamy beans.

- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/3 lbs. hot Italian sausage links, cut into 2" pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 19-oz. cans cannellini beans, drained (liquid reserved from 1 can)
- 1/4 cup roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley
- Pinch of red pepper flakes
- Salt and finely ground black pepper
- 6 cups chicken broth
- 2 heads escarole (about 2 lbs.), trimmed and cut into strips
- 1/4 lb. pecorino romano cheese (half cut into thick 2" strips, half finely grated)

1. Heat the oil in a large wide pot over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook until brown all over, 12-15 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer sausages to a plate, leaving fat in pot. Reduce heat to medium-low, add garlic, and cook for 30 seconds. Add beans and their liquid, increase heat to medium-high, and cook until hot, 5-7 minutes. Add sausages, parsley, pepper flakes, and salt and pepper to taste. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer briefly.

2. Meanwhile, bring broth to a boil in a large pot. Add escarole, reduce heat to medium-low, and add the strips of pecorino romano. Simmer until escarole is completely wilted, 4-5 minutes. Stir escarole mixture into bean mixture. Cook, partially covered, until thickened slightly, about 1 hour. Serve with remaining cheese.

RECIPE

Cauliflower Fritters

SERVES 6

Sandra Campo sprinkles these fritters with grated pecorino romano cheese while they're still hot, allowing the cheese to meld with their crisp exterior. She also uses the batter to make fritters with swiss chard; just blanch the chard in salted water, drain, and rinse. Form small handfuls of chard into balls, squeeze out excess liquid, dip in batter, and fry as instructed below.

Salt

- 1 large head cauliflower, cored and cut into 2"-3" florets
- 2 1/2 cups finely grated pecorino romano cheese
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 eggs
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Olive oil

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add cauliflower and cook until just tender, about 6 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold water. Set aside in a colander to let drain; pat completely dry.

2. Whisk together 1/2 cup of cheese, flour, milk, garlic, eggs, and salt and pepper to taste in a bowl until smooth to make a thick batter.

3. Pour oil into a deep skillet to a depth of 1/2" and heat over medium-high heat. Working in batches, drop cauliflower into batter and turn to coat thickly. Using a slotted spoon, carefully transfer battered cauliflower to oil and fry, turning occasionally and spooning hot oil over the top, until deep golden brown all over, 5-7 minutes. Transfer fritters to a paper towel-lined plate as they are done, generously sprinkling each layer with some of the remaining cheese. Serve fritters hot or at room temperature.

Thai food is a perfect blend
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Chicago Guide

Where to Stay, Where to Eat, and More

Dinner with drinks and tip:

EXPENSIVE Over \$60 MODERATE \$20-\$60 INEXPENSIVE Under \$20

For assistance with your Chicago travel plans, contact the Chicago Office of Tourism at 877/244-2246 or visit www.cityofchicago.org/tourism.

WHERE TO STAY

CONRAD CHICAGO 521 North Rush Street (312/645-1500; www.hiltonfamilychicago.com). Rates: \$215-\$455 double. This smart, stylish, conveniently located hotel in the center of the Loop, Chicago's downtown core, features a restaurant that offers an eclectic menu of East Asian-inflected fare.

THE DRAKE HOTEL 140 East Walton Place (800/553-7253; www.thedrakehotel.com). Rates: \$229-\$479 double. One of the last of the grand old Chicago hotels, the Drake has 535 well-appointed rooms and an attentive staff. The hotel has three restaurants, including the storied Cape Cod Room, famous for its lobster thermidor.

HOTEL INDIGO 1244 North Dearborn Parkway (312/787-4980; www.hotelindigo.com). Rates: \$179-\$369 double. This seaside-themed hotel located on a quiet, tree-lined street in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood, just north of the Loop, has 165 comfortable rooms, some with stone fireplaces.

HOTEL MONACO 225 North Wabash Avenue (866/610-0081 www.monacochicago.com). Rates: \$179-\$220 double. A stone's throw from Millennium Park, downtown Chicago's art-filled "greenspace", Hotel Monaco has a staid exterior but a warm heart. Each of its 192 rooms features a "meditation station": a window seat from which you can contemplate the city's skyline.

PARK HYATT CHICAGO 800 North Michigan Avenue (312/335-1234; www.parkchicago.hyatt.com). Rates: \$425-\$545 double. Situated on Michigan Avenue's Magnificent Mile, the Park Hyatt has 198 chic rooms, many with views of Lake Michigan. The hotel also houses NoMI, chef Christophe David's contemporary-French restaurant.

SHERATON CHICAGO HOTEL & TOWERS 301 East North Water Street (312/464-1000; www.starwoodhotels.com). Rates: \$179-\$290 double. This recently renovated Sheraton is located in the downtown-adjacent lakeside neighborhood known as Streeterville, near Navy Pier. It has more than 1,200 modern rooms and five restaurants and bars.

THE WESTIN CHICAGO RIVER NORTH 320 North Dearborn Street

(312/744-1900; www.starwoodhotels.com). Rates: \$200-\$400 double. The Westin's 424 rooms are tastefully decorated in neutral tones, and the rest of the hotel, which is located in the heart of Chicago's theater district, has a pleasant, spalike feel.

THE WHITEHALL HOTEL 105 East Delaware Place (312/944-6300; www.thewhitehallhotel.com). Rates: \$149-\$329 double. The lobby of this hotel, which occupies a stately 1920s building, has the air of a well-appointed living room, and many of the 221 rooms contain four-poster beds.

WHERE TO EAT

ALINEA 1723 North Halsted Street (312/867-0110; www.alinearestaurant.com). Expensive. Chef Grant Achatz has earned a reputation as a mad scientist of avant-garde cuisine, but he remains, first and foremost, an excellent chef. Expect a meal that is theatrical, unconventional, and delicious.

ARMY & LOU'S 422 East 75th Street (773/483-3100; www.armyandlous.com). Inexpensive. This 62-year-old South Side soul food mecca is as legendary for its cobblers as it is for its roster of well-known customers, including Jesse Jackson and the current Mayor Daley.

BIN 36 339 North Dearborn Street (312/755-9463; www.bin36.com). Moderate. Brian Duncan, a James Beard Award nominee for outstanding wine service, has assembled an impressive wine list at this American-Mediterranean restaurant. Menu highlights include peppercorn-crusted swordfish and chicken with sweet-corn flan.

BLACKBIRD 619 West Randolph Street (312/715-0708; www.blackbirdrestaurant.com). Expensive. When chef Paul Kahn opened Blackbird, ten years ago, it instantly became a culinary trendsetter, and with its sophisticated take on American cooking, the restaurant remains a bench-

mark for top-end Chicago dining. Its sister restaurant next door, Avec, has a more rustic menu, with artisanal foods like house-cured salumi and free-range meats roasted in a wood-fired oven.

BORINQUEN RESTAURANT (1720 North California Avenue; 773/227-6038; www.borinquenjibaro.com). Inexpensive. This bustling establishment is home to the jibarito, a steak and plantain sandwich, and also serves many Puerto Rican specialties, from lechón (roasted pork) to mofongo (plantains mashed with meat or seafood).

BURT'S PLACE 8541 North Ferris Avenue, Morton Grove (847/965-7997). Inexpensive. Located on a leafy side street in a northern suburb, this 36-year-old gem serves some of the city's best deep dish pizza, made with loving care by owner Burt Katz.

CALUMET FISHERIES 3259 East 95th Street (773/933-9855). Inexpensive. Housed in a tiny building next to the 95th Street drawbridge, amid the steel mills of South Chicago, this half-century-old smoked- and fried-fish shack serves shrimp, trout, salmon, chub, and smelt. For a take-out meal, go for the smoked shrimp.

CARNITAS LA MICHOCANA 2049 West Cermak Road (773/254-2970). Inexpensive. Restaurants in the Mexican-American neighborhood of Pilsen, like this one, take pride in remaining true to the traditional ways of preparing carnitas, slow-cooked pork served in corn tortillas. Enjoy your carnitas tacos with a glass of agua de guayaba (guava juice), or purchase the meat by the pound to take home.

CHARLIE TROTTER'S 816 West Armitage Avenue (773/248-6228; www.charlietrotters.com). Expensive. Chef Charlie Trotter is an elder statesman of Chicago's fine-dining scene. His Lincoln Park restaurant, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, remains a hugely popular destination for dishes like lamb with aged

manchego and Japanese sweetfish with creamed lemon.

DODO 935 North Damen Avenue (773/772-3636; www.dodochicago.com). *Moderate*. This intimate restaurant in the trendy Ukrainian Village neighborhood offers breakfast until 3:00 p.m. every day. Try the “Dodo daily hash”—a savory mix of ingredients like andouille sausage, summer kale, potatoes, and tomatillos served with eggs—or the french toast with vanilla cream and sautéed bananas.

DONALD'S FAMOUS HOT DOGS 2325 South Western Avenue (773/254-7777). *Inexpensive*. A perfect exemplar of a classic Chicago hot dog stand, this take-out joint on the near South Side serves up a proper Chicago dog, as well as Italian beef.

ED'S POTSTICKER HOUSE 3139 South Halsted Street (312/326-6898). *Inexpensive*. Chicago's tiny Chinatown contains a surprising range of regional Chinese restaurants, including Sichuanese, Shanghaiese, Taiwanese, and even rare Yunnanese options. Some of the best food, however, can be found at this *dongbei*, or northeastern-style, restaurant, which serves specialties like scallion pancakes with smoked pork belly and hand-pulled noodles.

EVEREST 440 South LaSalle Street (312/663-8920; www.everestrestaurant.com). *Expensive*. French-born chef Jean Joho has been serving some of the city's most dramatic meals here, on the 40th floor of the Chicago Stock Exchange Building, since 1986. Cream of cabbage soup with smoked sturgeon and cod in a pumpernickel-horseradish crust are perennial favorites. The restaurant also boasts an impressive selection of locally made cheeses.

FRONTERA GRILL/TOPOLOBAMPO 445 North Clark Street (312/661-0381; www.fronterakitchens.com). *Moderate*. *SAVEUR* contributing editor Rick Bayless's landmark

Frontera Grill opened in 1987 and still packs them in. Nationally renowned for its faithful renditions of regional Mexican cuisines, the restaurant and its higher-end counterpart, Topolobampo, located next door, present a changing menu incorporating seasonal organic produce.

GORDITAS AGUASCALIENTES 3132 West 26th Street (773/254-3466). *Inexpensive*. At this lively restaurant (which has a second location in the suburb of Cicero), homemade corn tortillas known as gorditas (literally, fat ones) are patted out by hand, cooked on a griddle, and stuffed with a variety of rich stews and flavorful fillings. Try the nopales (prickly pear cactus) or pork loin in an adobo marinade.

HECKY'S BARBECUE 1902 Green Bay Road, Evanston (847/492-1182; www.heckys.com). *Inexpensive*. Owner Hecky Powell started this popular barbecue restaurant and carryout operation, in the northern suburb of Evanston, in 1983. His most popular items are his pork ribs and rib tips, and rightly so.

HELEN'S 1732 East 79th Street (773/933-9871). *Inexpensive*. Roasted turkey legs, chopped steak, pork chops, and catfish are much loved staples at this stalwart South Side soul food café. Helen's also does a brisk breakfast trade. Take a seat at the counter, and order a plate of “Legs 'n Eggs”: a turkey leg with a side of eggs cooked to your liking.

HOT DOUG'S 3324 North California Avenue (773/279-9550). *Inexpensive*. This self-described “Sausage Superstore and Encased Meat Emporium” has earned a loyal fan base whose members are willing to wait in long lines for all-beef hot dogs, pork and duck sausages, and french fries cooked in duck fat (served Fridays and Saturdays).

IZOLA'S 522 East 79th Street (773/846-1484). *Inexpensive*. This 51-year-old soul food restaurant on

the South Side seems frozen in time, with wood paneling on the walls and a Formica lunch counter. Portraits of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and former Chicago mayor Harold Washington occupy pride of place on the dining-room walls, and Southern classics like mustard greens and sweet-potato pie are served with a smile.

LEM'S BAR-B-Q 311 East 75th Street (773/994-2428). *Inexpensive*. At this legendary South Side barbecue stand, owner James “Lem” Lemons smokes his ribs and rib tips over a gentle wood fire in a tempered glass-and-metal “aquarium” smoker. The rib tips are served over a bed of french fries, which soak up the vinegar-spiked sauce.

LINDY'S CHILI & GERTIE'S ICE CREAM 3685 South Archer Avenue (773/927-7807). *Inexpensive*. In operation since 1924, this is the original location of the small South Side chain, which serves thick, satisfying beef chili along with bar food staples like burgers and wings in a no-frills setting.

MOTO 945 West Fulton Market (312/491-0058; www.motorestaurant.com). *Expensive*. Executive chef Homaro Cantu, formerly of Charlie Trotter's and other notable restaurants, made a splash with his menu printed on edible paper, but there's plenty of substance behind the hype of this boldly designed, avant-garde restaurant, which specializes in unexpected dishes like the dessert “nachos” made from pastry dough with chocolate “beef”, kiwi “jalapeños”, and mango “cheese”.

NORTH POND 2610 North Cannon Drive (773/477-5845; www.northpondrestaurant.com). *Expensive*. An Arts and Crafts interior welcomes diners at chef-owner Bruce Sherman's much lauded seasonal-American restaurant in Lincoln Park. Sherman transforms everyday ingredients like eggs, lamb shanks,

and beets into highly innovative yet intensely satisfying cuisine.

OSTERIA DI TRAMONTO 601 North Milwaukee Avenue, Wheeling (847/777-6570; www.cenitare.com). *Moderate*. Chef Rick Tramonto, also of the famous Chicago restaurant Tru, reaches back to his Italian roots at this suburban restaurant with dishes like a veal, beef, and pork lasagne, based on a recipe of his mother's. Gale Gand, another Tru partner, contributes the desserts, including a rich chocolate-and-caramel tiramisù. The two have also opened a steak house, a sushi restaurant, and a coffeehouse at the same location.

THE PARTHENON 314 South Halsted Street (312/726-2407; www.theparthenon.com). *Moderate*. The purported birthplace of flaming saganaki, this Greektown denizen has been serving excellent traditional dishes—including gyros and braised lamb with tomatoes—for 39 years.

PRAIRIE GRASS CAFE 601 Skokie Boulevard, Northbrook (847/205-4433; www.prairiegrasscafe.com). *Moderate*. Under the supervision of chefs George Bumbaris and two-time James Beard Award winner Sarah Stegner, this sophisticated but welcoming suburban restaurant serves spare, down-to-earth dishes such as sautéed Lake Superior whitefish and penne with tomato-basil-meat sauce made with grass-fed beef.

SOUL QUEEN 9031 South Stony Island Avenue (773/731-3366; www.soulqueen.com). *Inexpensive*. Owner Helen Anglin has been presiding over this South Side institution since the 1970s. Try the restaurant's fried chicken and stellar peach cobbler.

SWEETS & SAVORIES 1534 West Fullerton Avenue (773/281-6778; www.sweetsandsavorieschicago.com). *Moderate*. Chef David Richards continues to attract avid devotees with his \$17 hamburger, which he serves topped with a mousse of seared Hudson Valley foie

gras. He has defiantly kept the item on the menu despite the year-and-a-half-old citywide ban on that rich delicacy.

SZALAS RESTAURANT 5214 South Archer Avenue (773/582-0300; www.szalasrestaurant.com). *Moderate*. This South Side Polish restaurant, housed in an A-frame “chalet” with wooden sleighs that function as seating and a man-made stream, complete with a water mill, caters to Chicago’s large Polish Highlander population. Try the smoked oscypek sheep’s milk cheese, and sample the extensive range of pork dishes.

THE VILLAGE 71 West Monroe Street (312/332-7005). *Moderate*. Opened in 1927 by the Capitanini family, this enduring Italian red-sauce joint (possibly the oldest Italian restaurant in town) serves two of Chicago’s classic dishes, shrimp de jonghe (savory bread crumb-stuffed shrimp) and chicken vesuvio (garlicky roasted chicken and potatoes).

ZAIQA RESTAURANT 858 North Orleans Street (312/280-6807). *Inexpensive*. Zaiqa is one of the many bare-bones but reliably good steam table joints that cater to Chicago’s large population of South Asian Muslims. The mutton biriyani and chile-spiked dal are rich and satisfying.

WHAT TO DO

3 SISTERS DELICATESSEN & GIFT 2854 West Devon Avenue (773/465-6695). This Russian deli, tended by women in white uniforms, offers a variety of smoked fish, cured meats, and prepared foods such as dumplings, blintzes, and stuffed cabbage, as well as canned and jarred imported goods.

AL-KHYAM BAKERY & GROCERY 4738 North Kedzie Avenue (773/583-3077). Occupying nearly a full city block in the famously diverse Albany Park neighborhood, Al-Khyam is one of Chicago’s most prominent

Middle Eastern food stores and bakeries; try any of the several varieties of world-class baklava.

ANDY’S DELI 5442 North Milwaukee Avenue (773/631-7304). This new Polish superstore features more than 150 kinds of sausage and smoked meats, and its take-away food counter features everything from homemade pierogi to traditional Polish soups.

ARGO GEORGIAN BAKERY 2812 West Devon Avenue (773/764-6322). The centerpiece of this tiny bakery on West Devon’s international strip is a traditional dome-shaped brick oven. Try the khachapuri, a flaky Georgian pastry made with feta, mozzarella, and farmers’ cheese, or take home a loaf of the traditional lavash, a large, round wheat flatbread.

BAYLOR’S MELON MARKET 10100 South Halsted Street. The arrival of Mississippi watermelons at Homer Baylor’s stand marks the beginning of summer on the South Side. Melons and peanuts from Baylor’s Mississippi farm are available from May through September.

BOBAK’S 5275 South Archer Avenue (773/735-5334; www.bobak.com). *Inexpensive*. From a small, family-owned deli, Bobak’s has grown into a one-stop shopping destination for Polish provisions, from house-made smoked sausages like krakowska to traditional baked goods, dumplings, and more. After shopping, try specialties like bigos (pork and sauerkraut stew) and pork loin wrapped in bacon at the all-you-can-eat buffet in the restaurant, next door.

FRESH FARMS INTERNATIONAL MARKET 2626 West Devon Avenue (773/764-3557). This South Asian produce and dry-goods emporium lies in the ethnically diverse West Rogers Park neighborhood and has an extensive selection of hard-to-find fresh and canned

fruits and vegetables.

KRAKUS HOMEMADE SAUSAGE 4772 North Milwaukee Avenue (773/736-3524). Aficionados of kabanos, a slender pork sausage, judge its quality by its distinctive snap, and the version at this old-fashioned butcher shop, which is air-dried longer than most in Chicago, has a cult following.

KUROWSKI SAUSAGE SHOP AND RICH’S BAKERY 2976-78 North Milwaukee Avenue (773/645-1692). This sausage shop and deli is known for both its exemplary hams and its smoked poultry, as well as for its traditional baked goods.

LINCOLN PARK FARMERS’ MARKET 2001 North Orchard Street, in the parking lot of Lincoln Park High School (www.cityofchicago.org); Saturday mornings, May through October. This is one of the oldest farmers’ markets in the city. Its nearly three dozen vendors sell both organic and nonorganic produce and cheeses—all from farms in Illinois and neighboring states.

MOO & OINK 7158 South Stony Island Avenue (773/493-7100; www.moo-oink.com); 4848 West Madison Street (773/473-4800); 8201 South Racine Avenue (773/962-8200); 3330 West 183rd Street, Hazel Crest (708/206-0308). Thousands of Chicagoans can sing the TV jingle for this popular minichain of meat-centric supermarkets on the South and West sides (the most recent addition to the chain, a superstore, opened in 2003 in the southern suburb of Hazel Crest). Ideal provisioners for Southern-style dishes, the stores sell staples like kale and collard greens, pigs’ feet, and spicy hot-link sausages.

NUTS ON CLARK 3830 North Clark Street (773/549-6622; www.nuts-onclark.com). This mecca for lovers of dried fruit and nuts also sells nut-based candies, and its house-made caramel

corn and cheese corn are legendary.

STAROPOLSKA 3028 North Milwaukee Avenue (773/342-0779). The stars of the show at this busy sausage shop are the slow-smoked hams, ribs, and pork shoulder, which are coated with a secret spice mixture. At the attached restaurant you can try those meats the way the locals like them, smothered in caramelized onions.

SUKHADIA’S 2559 West Devon Avenue (773/338-5400). This South Asian sweets shop, with branches on the East Coast, has an immense selection of pastries and sweet beverages, as well as a full menu of regional Indian savory dishes—among them specialties like masala dosa (a dal-and-rice crêpe filled with spiced potatoes) and Gujarati dishes like khandvi (spiced chickpea-flour rolls).

SUPER H MART 801 Civic Center Drive, Niles (847/581-1212; www.hmart.com). A global Korean supermarket just north of the city, in the suburb of Niles, Super H is a felicitous cross between Wal-Mart and an urban street market. It has a staggering selection of produce, meat, fish, and prepared foods.

VESECKY’S BAKERY 6634 West Cermak Road, Berwyn (708/788-4144). Czech-Americans from throughout the Midwest come to this tiny, 102-year-old bakery for traditional Bohemian and Czech country breads and pastries. Old-world recipes are still used for the Bohemian-style rye bread and for the splendid houska, a rich, braided sweet raisin bread.

Special thanks to Richard Tan for his assistance in compiling The Guide.

On the **SAVEUR** website (www.saveur.com/issue105): a list of the best old-fashioned Chicago taverns, a look inside a Frank Lloyd Wright kitchen, and a visit to the home of Chicago’s shawarma-style tacos.

America's Premier Pantries | PRESENTED BY JENN AIR

San Francisco sources for authentic ingredients and supplies

The city of San Francisco is a mecca for food devotees. It offers not only some of the world's best restaurants but also a treasure trove of cookware stores and ingredient markets selling goods from around the world. We've shopped and eaten our way from the Bay to the Pacific; here are ten of our favorite finds along the way.

Boulettes Larder. Culinarian and chef Amaryll Schwertner forages near and far for artisanal treasures to present at her one-of-a-kind food shop. Visitors will find North African couscous, whey, fresh yeast, true pimentón, duck fat, smoked salt from Wales, and custom-blended spice mixes, as well as a deliciously eccentric daily menu of dishes to eat on the spot or take home. **Ferry Building Marketplace; 415/399-1155; www.bouletteslarder.com.**

Columbus Cutlery. San Francisco chefs take their knives to Columbus Cutlery for sharpening and are often persuaded to buy more from the store's beautiful selection. The tiny shop is packed with knives and scissors, sold at very low prices, from the world's foremost knife makers. **358 Columbus Avenue; 415/362-1342.**

Cookin'. Owner Judith Kaminsky, an expert cook and former literature professor, curates this used-cookware store chock-full of hard-to-find vintage items like food mills, martini glasses, fondue sets, copper cookware, and old-fashioned blenders. **339 Divisadero Street; 415/861-1854.**

European Food Wholesale. In coolers and through the glass doors of the refrigerators in this eastern European artisanal food shop visitors can spot pickles, smoked fish, Ukrainian sausages, veal hot dogs, white farmers' cheese, salmon roe caviar, meat-filled pel'meni, and Russian sour cream. **3038 Clement Street; 415/750-0504.**

Ginn Wall. This Chinatown hardware store stocks Chinese cooking essentials: woks of all sizes, wok utensils, cleavers, stockpots, bamboo and metal steamers, and marble mortars—all at non-tourist prices. **1016 Grant Avenue; 415/982-6307.**



Molinari's Deli, above, is one of San Francisco's many world-class food shops.

Kamei. Restaurateurs and housewives may browse here the city's biggest collection of Asian cookware, dishware, utensils and, housewares. Look for items like celadon china, cracked-glaze Japanese bowls, coconut graters, and small appliances. Kamei is always the first stop for locals who

are supplying new kitchens. **547 Clement Street; 415/666-3688.**

La Palma Mexicatessen. Tortilla lovers make pilgrimages to this small factory where neighborhood ladies in aprons pat out thick Central American tortillas and thin Mexican ones. Salsas, chorizo

sausages, and cooked meats are sold by the pound alongside fresh Mexican cheeses, dried chiles, and spices. **2884 24th Street; 415/647-1500.**

Molinari's Deli. A bounteous Italian deli and one of San Francisco's original salami makers, Molinari, left, provisions both cooks and those who want to eat on the spot. Many a great sandwich has been composed around Molinari's spectacular hot red pepper-flecked salami. Olive oil, biscotti, anchovies, olives, marinated artichokes, peppers, pasta, polenta, and tins of tomatoes are stacked to the rafters. **373 Columbus Avenue; 415/421-2337.**

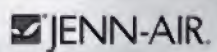
Seakor European Deli and Sausage Factory. Polish émigrés flock to Seakor to buy fresh and smoked kielbasa, dark-hued hunters' sausage, sauerkraut and smoked-meat hunter's stew, sides of smoked pork ribs, cured pork loins, and slabs of bacon. Nibble a hot sausage or some stuffed cabbage on a paper plate while you peruse the Polish magazines and greeting cards. **5957 Geary Boulevard; 415/387-8660.**

Sunset Supermarket. A trip to the Sunset Supermarket is a virtual journey through the countries of Asia. San Franciscan cooks shop for oxtails, honey citron tea, and fresh and dried noodles of every shape and kind. The shelves are filled with pickled vegetables, fresh and dried seaweed, and tofu. The produce and fish departments dazzle with their array of appealing goods, and there's no better place to find fresh pork in the city than Sunset Supermarket's butcher counter. **2425 Irving Street; 415/682-3738.**

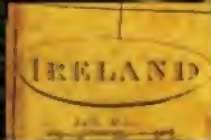
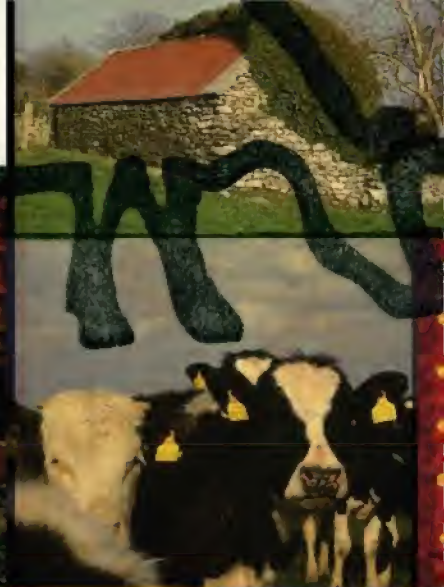
—Patricia Unterman, author of *San Francisco Food Lover's Pocket Guide* (Ten Speed Press, 2007) and owner and chef of San Francisco's Hayes Street Grill



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IN THE SAVEUR

KITCHEN

Discoveries, Tales, and Techniques from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman



Loving Spoonful

GIVEN ALL THE high-tech kitchen toys available to cooks these days—immersion circulators, Pacojet food processors, Japanese knives designed for arcane tasks—my favorite tool in my kitchen at North Pond (see “A Chef’s Journey”, page 60) might come as a surprise. It’s a spoon. Not a fancy one made of some special alloy but an inexpensive, stainless-steel spoon of the sort you might find in your own everyday-silverware drawer. I love spoons for just about everything: stirring, basting, turning, saucing, scraping, and, of course, tasting. I particularly like spoons when I’m flipping food. I find tongs to be awkward, and I’ve noticed that they can harm the integrity of ingredients, squeezing out succulent juices and bruising delicate exteriors. Another thing I appreciate about cooking with spoon in hand is that I don’t have to keep switching from tool to tool—say, from tongs to fork to spatula. As a result, my performance in the kitchen has become more streamlined and efficient. My requirements are simple: a good spoon for cooking should be about the size of a tablespoon and made of stainless steel, and it should have a relatively wide rim. A lot of cooks like bigger spoons; in fact, the New York chef Gray Kunz has patented a particularly deep-bowled spoon, which works really well for saucing. If you want only one spoon for most jobs, though, I’d suggest something wider and not quite as deep. Regardless of its exact dimensions, a spoon is gentler and more suited to the kind of tactile connection that makes all food look—and taste—better. —Bruce Sherman

KITCHEN

A FAVORITE RITUAL when I was a teenager growing up outside of Chicago was piling into my mom's Volvo with my friends and heading to Greektown, a stretch of bustling Greek restaurants along Halsted Street just west of the downtown Loop. We'd agonize over the woes of high school, trade gossip, and eat tsatsiki (a cool yogurt and cucumber sauce), spanakopita (flaky phyllo-and-spinach pastries), and braised lamb.

Invariably, the highlight of every one of those Greektown meals was the rousing tableside phenomenon known as flaming saganaki—a square slice of a Greek sheep's milk cheese called kasseri that's fried in olive oil, doused in brandy, and set alight. When the waiter touched his lighter to the shallow pan cradled carefully in his other hand, fire would leap toward the ceiling, theatrically illuminating the faces of me and my friends as we cried a full-throated “Opa!” (roughly, the Greek equivalent of “Olé!”). Then, with a magician's flourish, the waiter would extinguish the flames with a squeeze of lemon juice and place the steaming skillet before us. The bubbly, crisp-edged cheese had a



My First Flame

smoky flavor that perfectly balanced the fruitiness of the oil and the boozy bite of the liquor used to ignite it.

Named for the round, two-handled pan in which the cheese

is served, saganaki harks back to an ancient Greek tradition of cooking and serving food in similarly small, shallow skillets. Flaming saganaki, with its fiery spectacle, is believed to be a

Chicago invention (see page 17 for a few other Chicago originals); it was purportedly first served in 1968 at the Parthenon, one of Greektown's best-known eateries. Owner Chris Liakouras says he presented a plate of fried kasseri cheese to a group of Greek ladies who—apparently taken with the era's fad for setting food on fire—urged him to flambé it. Liakouras instantly recognized the dish's potential. “You light it up, and you have a great show!” he says.

Your landlord may tell you otherwise, but it's easy to make flaming saganaki at home. Dip a four-ounce piece of kasseri cheese in an egg beaten with a little milk and dredge it in flour. Fry the cheese in one tablespoon of olive oil in a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat, turning it once, until it's golden and crusty, one to two minutes. Transfer the cheese to a small warmed casserole, douse it with two tablespoons of brandy, and light it with a match. Squeeze a lemon wedge over the cheese to put out the flames. And don't forget the “Opa!” —*Katherine Cancila*

Salvador Martinez, a waiter at the Parthenon, puts on a show.



KITCHEN ORIGAMI Bruce Sherman, chef of the restaurant North Pond (see page 60), uses a parchment paper circle instead of a lid to cover a pot when making the parsley coulis for the soft-boiled eggs with bacon-infused sweet potatoes on page 62. The paper circle (sometimes called a cartouche), which nestles against the food, creates the perfect balance of moisture retention and evaporation, whereas a lid merely traps liquid and steam. We found that this technique is also good for poaching delicate fruit like pears or apples. Here's how to create it. **1** | Fold a rectangular sheet of parchment paper in half lengthwise. **2** | Fold the paper in half, widthwise, so that it is in quarters. The resulting rectangle will have two folded sides and two open sides. **3** | Place the paper in front of you so that the longer folded side is on the left and the shorter is at the bottom. Fold the bottom of the paper up to meet the longer folded side, creating a triangle. **4** | Fold two more times in the same direction to make a slender triangle. **5** | Align the tip of the triangle with the center of the pot. Cut off the back of the paper triangle where it meets the rim of the pot and discard. **6** | Unfold the circle and tuck it into the pot, gently pressing it against the ingredients. —*Todd Coleman*

KITCHEN



Chicago, Nose to Tail

Chicago has long been blessed with a bounty of pork, thanks to its history as a meatpacking hub and its proximity to major pork-producing states like Iowa and Indiana. As a result, the city's cooks are skilled at getting the most out of a hog. Here are a few of the more flavorful cuts featured in this issue's recipes and a couple that we discovered eating our way around town. **1 | PORK NECK BONES** These pieces of bone, meat, and cartilage lend body and depth to long-cooked foods, such as stews and sauces (including the hearty tomato ragù on page 80). **2 | KASSLER RIBS** A contribution from Chicago's German community, these smoked rib chops, named for the butcher in Berlin who popularized them a century ago, are delicious braised in beer with apples. **3 | SALT PORK** Cut, like bacon, from the pig's belly, this fatty portion is preserved in salt (but never smoked) and used to flavor soups and Southern-style greens (like the version on page 76). **4 | RIB TIPS** These slabs of meat and bone are what's left over after spareribs are squared off to produce a cut called St. Louis-style ribs; Lem's Bar-B-Q, on the South Side, smokes rib tips until they're dark and crusty, then cuts them into riblets, which are coated with a tangy sauce. **5 | FATBACK** The thick layer of fat that encases the loin of a pig can be used in any number of ways: rendered for fat in dishes like bigos (see page 48), cut into sheets to wrap around roasts (in a technique called barding), or cut into strips to thread through lean cuts of meat to keep them moist (larding). **6 | PIGS' EARS** Sold in bins at Polish butcher shops throughout Chicago, ears are perfect for enriching stocks and soups; they're also tasty on their own when poached and then roasted. (See page 96 for a source for kassler ribs and rib tips.) —T.C.



Queen of Soul

Izola White (above, sitting in front of a portrait of former Chicago mayor Harold Washington), the owner of Izola's, a half-century-old soul food restaurant on Chicago's South Side (see page 69), learned to cook Southern food from her mother, using the wood-burning stove in the family's home in Kenton, Tennessee. I recently talked with her about her life inside and outside of the kitchen.

What's the first dish your mother taught you to cook? She taught me how to bake a chicken and make dressing—corn bread dressing, never white bread. It's still the recipe we use at the restaurant.

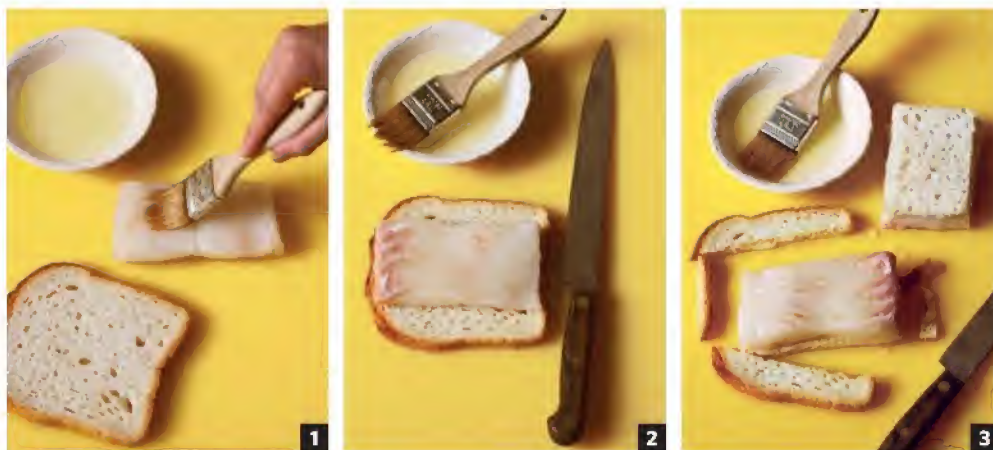
What's your favorite ingredient? Sweet potatoes! I peel them, chop them up, and put them in a pot on the stove with a lot of sugar. The trick is, don't add water; they make their own as they cook. Put in some butter, cinnamon, and nutmeg, and cook them over low heat for a long time.

Has anyone else ever taught you about cooking? No. I was always telling *them* what to do.

What's kept you so strong all these years? To tell you the truth, I think it's because I was good to my mother. After I went into business, I made it so she didn't have to work for nobody else for the rest of her life. Knowing that kept me strong.

Have you passed your experience on to anyone? You know, I didn't ever have any children. But a whole lot of people call me mama. —Liz Pearson

KITCHEN



WONDER BREAD Bruce Sherman learned this innovative technique for transforming supermarket sliced white bread into an elegant crust for fish (see the bread-crust halibut with leek ragoût and red pepper purée, on page 68) from his colleague Cornelius Gallagher, who, at the time, was the chef at Oceana, a New York City seafood restaurant. "I liked it instantly because it provides a simple yet interesting counterpoint to soft-fleshed fish," says Sherman. Here's how to go about it.

1 | Using a pastry brush, paint the flesh side (the rounded top) of a skinless fish filet with beaten egg white. **2** | Place the fish's egg white-coated side on the center of a thin slice of white bread (the sturdier the bread the better); gently press down on the fish to adhere it to the bread. **3** | Using a sharp knife, cut away the excess bread from the sides of the fish, cutting as close to the edges of the fish as possible, so that the bread molds perfectly to the shape of the filet. —T.C.

WINE AND DRINK SUGGESTIONS INSPIRED BY THE FOODS IN THIS ISSUE

AS THE WEATHER STARTS to turn cool, the wines people choose tend to get heartier—especially in Chicago, where last year's first snowfall came on October 12. Not surprisingly, many of the foods featured in this month's issue are best served with robust, substantial wines.

Domaine de la Mordorée Lirac "Cuvée de la Reine des Bois" 2005 (\$37), from the southern Rhône Valley in France, offers flavors reminiscent of black pepper, dried herbs, plum, and berry fruit, so it will pair well with the spice-braised lamb shanks with lentils from North Pond chef Bruce Sherman on page 65. Sherman's bread-crust halibut with leek ragoût and red pepper purée on page 68 would also be well suited to a wine with some weight, in this case a white. A **Baileyana Firepeak Grand Cuvée Chardonnay 2005** (\$30) from California's Edna Valley has the requisite heft but is well-balanced.

With a richer dish like the lobster thermidor on page 22, try a pinot gris from Alsace.

Because that grape ripens so fully there, the wines seem almost decadent; **Domaine Albert Mann Grand Cru Fürstentum 2004** (\$32) is a favorite. Another Alsatian varietal, riesling, possesses a depth that makes it a good partner for the bigos on page 48; the **Trimbach 2004** (\$19) is bone dry and widely available. While the stuffed cabbage rolls on page 49 might seem to call for a similar wine, the dish's creamy sauce makes a light red a better choice; the **Louis Jadot Pinot Noir Bourgogne 2005** (\$20) balances rich fruit with firm structure.

The Italian-American foods on pages 79 through 81—tomato ragù, cauliflower fritters, ricotta dumplings, escarole stew—call for a red, too. Barberas from the Piedmont, in Italy, offer deep flavor and a light body; they can stand up to these dishes without overwhelming them. The well-priced **Eredi Lodali Barbera d'Alba 2005** (\$13) would be a great choice, especially if you'll be cooking for a crowd. (See page 96 for a source for the wines mentioned.) —PAUL LUKACS, *Wine Editor*



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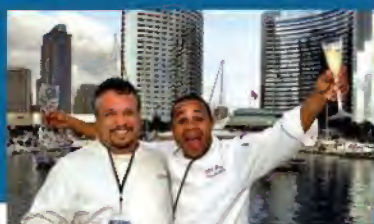


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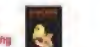
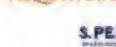
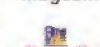
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NO. 105

KITCHEN

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BY LIZ PEARSON

Fare

If you don't want to wait until your next trip to the Windy City to have a Chicago-style hot dog, make some at home; many of the ingredients are just a phone call away. Order S. Rosen's Mary Ann poppy seed **hot dog buns** (\$2.09 for a package of eight) from Natural Ovens Bakery (800/558-3535; www.naturalovens.com). Vienna Beef's skinless **beef franks** (\$29.95 for a package of 48) are available directly from the company (800/366-3647; www.viennabeef.com), which also sells a Chicago-style Condiment Pack (\$17.95 for a package containing one 12-ounce jar of Chicago-style **relish**, one 12-ounce jar of **sport peppers**, one 10.5-ounce jar of Plochman's yellow **mustard**, and one 12-ounce jar of **celery salt**). For \$29.95, Vienna Beef also sells a kit containing a sampling of all the condiments mentioned above, as well as 16 poppy seed buns and 16 skinless beef franks. Look for our favorite Midwest **cheeses** in your local cheesemonger's case, or have some shipped directly to you. Contact Capriole Inc. (812/923-9408; www.capriolegoatcheese.com) for the Wabash Cannonball (\$14.00 for a 4-ounce piece) and other outstanding varieties (the minimum order is \$45.00). The company also sells samplers and gift assortments (\$45.00–\$115.00), among them a selection of its cheeses along with tasty accompaniments like Italian pear mostarda. Wisconsin Cheese Mart (888/482-7700; [\[mart.com\]\(http://mart.com\)\) sells Uplands Cheese Company Pleasant Ridge Reserve \(\\$22.00 per pound\) and Roth Käse aged Grand Cru Gruyère \(\\$14.00 per pound\). Order Carr Valley's award-winning cheeses, including its Ten Year Cheddar \(\\$19.50 per pound\), directly from the Carr Valley Cheese Company \(800/462-7258; \[www.carrvalleycheese.com\]\(http://www.carrvalleycheese.com\)\). Unfortunately, Old Europe Cheese Inc. \(269/925-5003; \[www.oldeuropecheese.com\]\(http://www.oldeuropecheese.com\)\) doesn't distribute its products via mail order at this time; however, you can contact the company directly for details on distributors in your area. For more information about **Check, Please!**, the Chicago-born public-television restaurant review program, including some of the recipes featured in the episodes, visit \[www.wttw.com\]\(http://www.wttw.com\). To try **mother-in-law sandwiches**, visit Fat Johnnie's Famous Red Hots \(7242 South Western Avenue\). It also serves more-traditional, Chicago-style hot dogs.](http://www.wisconsincheese</p>
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Classic

Hot Sauce World (781/925-4150; www.hotsauceworld.com) sells **sport peppers** (\$4.29 for an 8-ounce jar) for making Italian beef sandwiches. If you're in Chicago and want to taste the real thing, stop by Al's #1 Italian Beef (1079 West Taylor Street; 312/226-4017) or Mr. Beef (666 North Orleans Street; 312/266-8251) for some of the best **Italian beef** sandwiches in town. And if the juicy sandwich has whetted your appetite for more real Chicago eats, look for author Carol Mighton Haddix's **book** *Chicago Cooks: 25 Years of Chicago Culinary History and Great Recipes from Les Dames d'Escoffier*, to be published in November by Surrey Books.

City of Pork

For more beloved family and restaurant recipes from Chicago's Polish community, order Joseph Zurawski's lovingly written **book** *Polish Chicago: Our History, Our Recipes* (\$37.50) from G. Bradley Publish-

ing Inc. (800/966-5120; www.gbradleypublishing.com). Although Bobak's Sausage Company (773/735-5334; www.bobak.com) doesn't currently ship any of its products to consumers, contact the store directly for information on distributors in your area.

A Chef's Journey

To make the apple-lavender tarte tatin, order superior food-grade dried **lavender buds** (\$12.00 per cup) and sprigs (\$10.00 for five bunches) from Lavender Green (703/470-2074; www.lavendergreen.com).

Kitchen

Ask for some of Chicago's favorite pork cuts, like pork neck bones, salt pork, fatback, and pigs' ears, at your local butcher shop. To order smoky **kassler ribs** (\$7.95 per pound), contact Paulina Market (773/248-6272; www.paulinameatmarket.com). Moo & Oink (773/420-2000; www.moo-oink.com) sells pork **rib tips** (\$10.99 for a 10-pound box) at all its Chicago locations (7158 South Stony Island Avenue, 8201 South Racine Avenue, and 4848 West Madison Street); you may also call the store to have some shipped directly to you. For **wines** listed in "What to Pour", contact the following: Kysela Père et Fils (540/722-9228) for the Domaine de la Mordorée Lirac "Cuvée de la Reine des Bois"; Baileyana (805/597-8200) for the Baileyana Firepeak Grand Cuvée Chardonnay; Weygandt-Metzler (610/486-0800) for the Domaine Albert Mann Grand Cru Fürstentum; Dia-geo Chateau & Estate (707/299-2600) for the Trimbach Riesling; Kobrand Corporation (212/490-9300) for the Louis Jadot Pinot Noir Bourgogne; and Siema Wines (301/702-3000) for the Eredi Lodali Barbera d'Alba.

Corrections

In our April 2007 issue, the recipe for buckwheat crêpes on page 43 should have called for 1/2 cup milk. • If you're interested in making the root beer on page 42 of our August/September 2007 issue, please note that dried sassafras root bark is no longer available through Leener's. Instead, order dried sassafras root bark (\$3.00 per ounce) from Dandelion Botanical (877/778-4869; www.dandelionbotanical.com).

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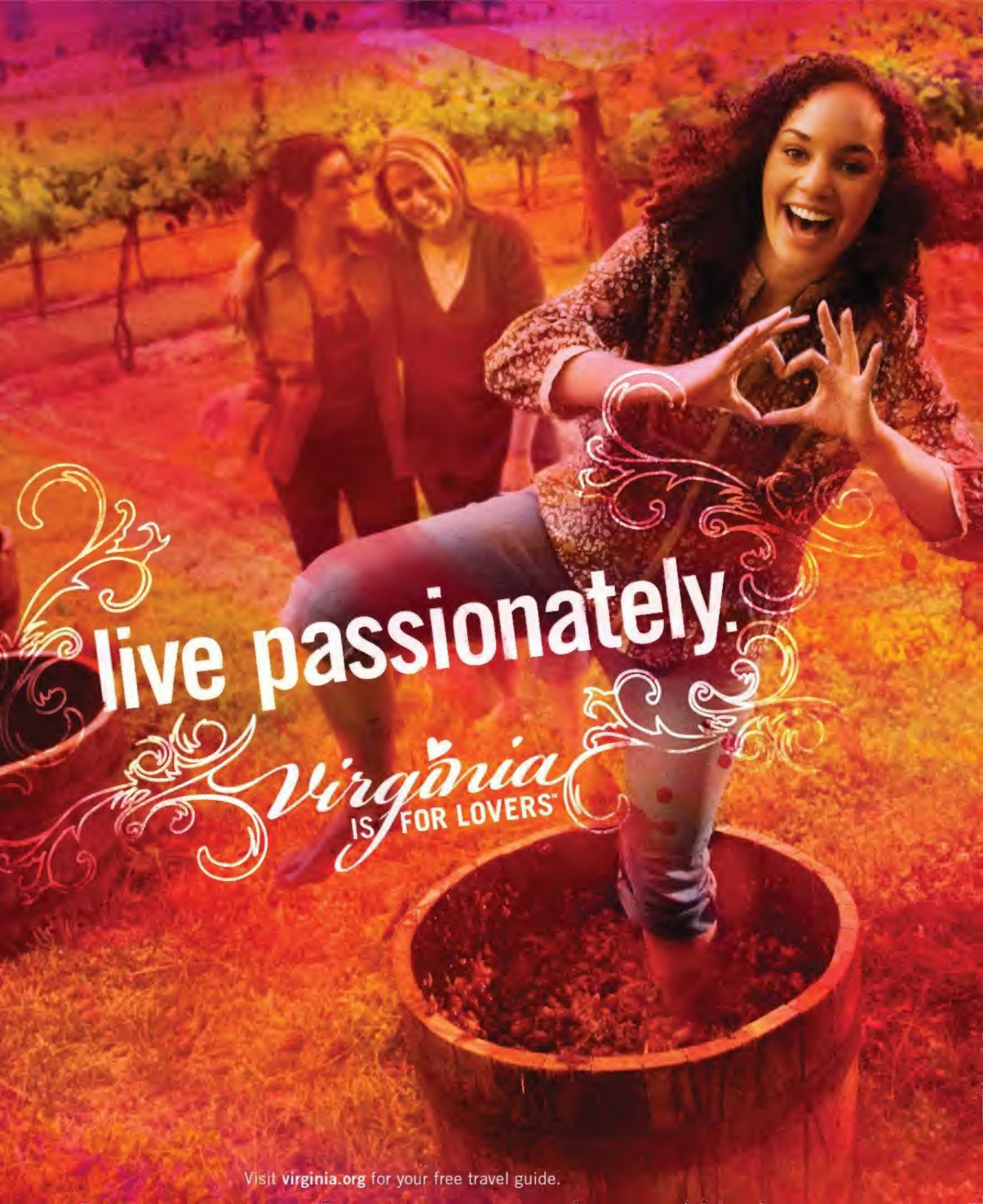
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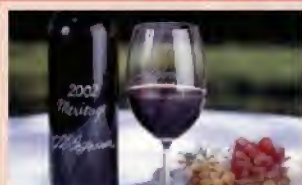
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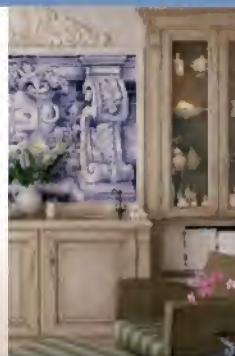
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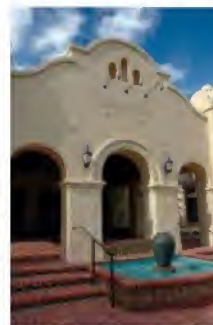
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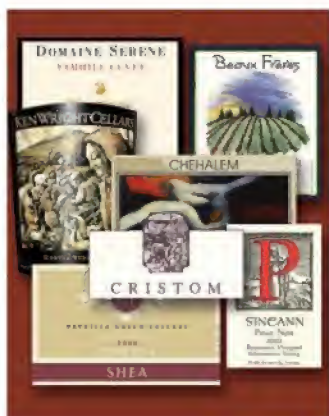
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M O M E N T



TIME 2:20 P.M., July 13, 2007

PLACE Michigan Avenue, Chicago

Street performer Preston Dinwiddie takes a break with a submarine sandwich.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LARRY NIGHSWANDER

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